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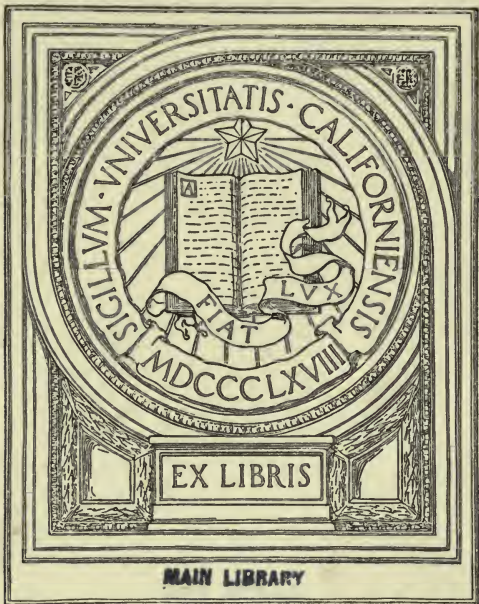


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GUN, RIFLE, AND HOUND

IN

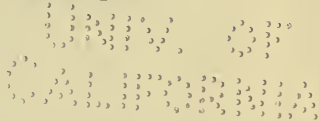
EAST AND WEST



GUN, RIFLE, AND HOUND

IN

EAST AND WEST



BY

“SNAFFLE”

[Dunkin, Robert]
11

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY DIXON

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LD.

1894

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CRYSTAL PALACE, S.E.

Dedicated

TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT, K.G.,

LORD LIEUTENANT OF MONMOUTHSHIRE.

913656

PREFACE.

PERHAPS this book—or at all events, as much thereof as relates to the rifle—would have been better named “The Confessions of an Indifferent Shot,” but I have suppressed the record of many misses to avoid monotony. Still, as any interest the work may have must lie in the fact that it consists entirely of personal reminiscences, the mention of many instances when my bullet found its billet in mother earth could not be avoided.

It may be objected, and perhaps with reason, that in these days when every year sees the publication of books by great *shikaris*, describing unfamiliar sport in unknown lands, mine is but a commonplace record of such sport as comes in the way of hundreds of English soldiers. From my own experience I can urge, however, that a very small percentage of them avail themselves of such opportunities, whereas I would claim whatever credit may be due to one who never failed to make use of any chance that want of means,

and, till latterly, want of time, did not render impracticable. Moreover, I personally never fail to take pleasure in reading of such sport as I have shared in, and it is in the hope that this is also the feeling of many others that I venture to bring this volume before the public.

Chapter III. has previously appeared in the *Road* magazine, to the proprietors of which periodical I here desire to express my thanks for their courteous sanction of its republication.

SNAFFLE.

NIMROD CLUB,
LONDON, S.W.

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GUN, RIFLE, AND HOUND

IN EAST AND WEST



CHAPTER I.

SNIPE-SHOOTING.

DEAR to the gunner's heart is the little "long-bill," for wherever he may wander, there, at some time or other of the year, the snipe will be found. No other game is so widely distributed, unless it is the hare. But the hare varies from the Arctic variety through many species, ending with the tropical black-necked kind. The snipe on the other hand is, I believe, always the same in the Old World. Of course there are even in England the three kinds: the common snipe, jack snipe, and the rare double snipe. But it is the common snipe which one finds alike in the bogs of Ireland, the marshes of Siberia, and the rice-fields of India. In America I have heard tell of other kinds (do they call them wood snipe?), in name, habits, and appearance a cross between the woodcock and the snipe.

I have often pondered on this question: where are

the enormous quantities of the *Scolopacidæ*, which come south every winter, bred?

When the frosts come, in the British Isles, and the north winds blow strong, there are the snipe and the woodcock, sometimes in hundreds. Have I not myself been an eye-witness almost to the arrival of the snipe in the tropics? I have seen them listless, almost unwilling to move, and when shot mere skin and bones. Evidently they had not arrived more than a few hours. Next week they were strong and lively, a month after deliciously fat, and well worth the trouble they gave in the shooting. Where do they all come from? The day before writing these lines I received a letter, speaking of the enormous bags of woodcock which are annually made on the Adriatic coasts, from M. von Hohenberg, who edits with such skill the German sporting paper, the *Waldmann*. In it he speaks of bags of one hundred woodcock per gun being frequently made by parties of three and four guns on the island of Veglia, near Fiume. Again I ask, where do they all come from? The explanation given by the Indian sportsman is Siberia, but Siberia is not now a *terra incognita*. Has any traveller visited the breeding grounds where these myriads of snipe and woodcock are hatched? For the few that breed with us are not worth considering. I have a theory of my own on the subject, based on the many proofs we have that the North Pole is not, as has long been thought, given up entirely to ice and snow. May it not be there that these happy breeding grounds are situated? The other day some papers informed

us that the mammoth was said still to wander in the unknown north. I think it may be urged with more probability that the woodcock, snipe, and other winter visitants to southern climes breed among those fastnesses.

The writer who would speak of snipe-shooting finds the way somewhat barred by the magic pages of Jefferies. With what vivacity and what fidelity to nature does he depict the rambles of the "Amateur Poacher" by the frozen brooklet in quest of this bird, which was evidently a favourite with the author. We can almost see the bird rising from the sedges with its shrill cry, which he attempts to reproduce as "scape! scape!" and which he says the bird often acts up to by eluding the aim of the unskilful gunner. The snipe certainly has a great reputation for being difficult to hit, which in my opinion is rather badly founded. There are many birds less easy to kill on the wing. I consider driven partridges to be so, the green parrakeet certainly is. Some people say "there is a knack in snipe-shooting." If so there is a knack in all shooting, which simply consists in the working together of the hand and the eye. I would give two reasons for snipe often getting away: the first is that the bird, so to say, trades on his reputation, and the mere fact of a snipe getting up makes the gunner nervous and hurried. The second is, that in England they are generally only incidental to a day's shooting, and are consequently often shot at with No. 5 shot, when of course it is "odds on the bird." I certainly have never found them very difficult to kill, though I

should be sorry to lay down, as some people do, definite rules on the subject. The only good rule is not to be in a hurry. To this there is, however, one exception, which is when a snipe rises rather wild and nearly out of range. He must then be shot directly he gets on the wing. One more hint: when snipe-shooting, keep a sharp look-out overhead. Snipe have a way of circling round their native bogs, and though they are sometimes very high up, they not unfrequently pass over one within very fair range, and give very pretty shots.

Snipe-shooting is essentially a poor man's sport. Being purely wanderers (though a few breed with us) they cannot be preserved, and not being game they come within the scope of a ten-shilling gun license. Hence in country places where there is not much preserving, we often find a handicraftsman, who not only knows where to find the snipe, but who rarely misses one. Every one knows what sort of places to find snipe in; the brooklet or open drain running through sedgy banks, or the boggy spot in a badly drained field. I may here remark, I once shot one in a young oak coppice on a hill noted for being entirely without water. But the difficulty is to know *which* of these spots the snipe affect. For they are very fanciful, and out of two similar spots one will always hold a snipe, and the other never. The curious thing about these places is that they are never over-populated and yet rarely untenanted. You may find a snipe there (generally there is only one) and kill him one week, but the next week there will be another. If you bag

him also, the odds are that you will shortly find his successor at home. I regret to say I never could see a snipe on the ground, but judging from the pictures he must present a most comical aspect, with his long legs under him and his ridiculous little tail cocked up. I must own to once having shot at a snipe sitting, but it was when I had marked him down. I naturally and deservedly missed him. I can only allege in my defence that we were shooting for the score, *i.e.*, to see who could bag most.

When a boy, I was fortunate enough to have a snipe bog within a mile of my home. It was common—and consequently unpreserved—land, and, except by myself, rarely shot over. Consequently it was always good for a few couple of long-bills. Imagine my disgust one Christmas holiday on finding a son (or grandson) of the celebrated Shrapnel located in the neighbourhood, whose gun had done as much execution on my bog as ever his progenitor's shells did among the French. He certainly was, I think, the very finest snipe-shot I ever saw, but that knowledge did little at the time to assuage my wrath. Poor fellow! he is long since dead; and the bog is mostly drained too.

I have already said that the snipe is to be found almost wherever one goes. The only place I have not myself seen it is in South Africa, but I would not say it does not travel there. There are plenty in Egypt. Ireland has always been celebrated for its snipe-shooting, which can generally be had for the asking. Of all countries which I have visited, the one

which far and away excels all others is the island of Ceylon. In some of the districts the enormous quantity of snipe can scarcely be credited by one who has not seen them. I have visited tanks far away in the jungle, when I really believe one's bag would only be limited by the length of the day and the number of one's cartridges. Yet the old residents say the snipe are far less numerous than they used to be, at all events in the accessible districts. In the places I speak of the snipe are safe from slaughter. The wandering sportsman knows he can only use what he himself can eat, as there is probably not another white man within seventy miles, and that much firing will only alarm the big game he has come so far to seek. But the old hands tell of such bags as a hundred couple being made with a muzzle-loader (more probably two with some one to load) within a few miles of the capital, Colombo. It certainly could not be done now, but I have known two guns kill sixty couple in a morning within five-and-twenty miles of that town. Turning to my old diaries, of which I have now, alas, a considerable and ever-increasing heap, I find the record of the best day at the long-bills I ever had.

A good many years ago I was stationed (for my sins) at the little Fort of Point de Galle, the most southerly town of any size in the island. From a sporting, as well as from every other point of view, it was a miserable station; at all events, during the summer months. Still, we heard good reports of it as a winter shooting place, and we looked eagerly forward

to the season which would bring back the teal and the snipe.

At last they came, and their first appearance nearly caused my death. It was in this way. One of our ways of killing time that summer was to drive out to some neighbouring cinnamon estates, to shoot green pigeons. These beautiful birds abounded in the cinnamon bushes and jâk-trees, and used to give a certain amount of sport. One evening in the late autumn two of us were out at this place, and one of us shot a pigeon. At the report of the gun a wisp of birds rose in a marshy bit close to and settled just a little further on.

“Snipe!” we both cried with delight, and without a word more dashed into the marsh. I must now explain that though it has been my invariable rule in the tropics to shoot in “Field” boots, on this occasion, as I did not expect to leave the estate paths, which were well kept, I only had knickerbockers, stockings, and low shoes. Of course in a climate where the thermometer never goes as low as 73° , wet feet didn’t signify.

I think one snipe had been shot, but by whom I forget. We were pressing on with guns ready and eyes fixed ahead, when something drew my attention to a tussock of swamp grass on which I was about to step. There, disturbed by my arrival, and with hood half extended, was a huge *cobra-di-capello*. Without waiting to put my gun to the shoulder, I fired from the hip and blew his head off. It was only then I realised the horrible risk I had run. If I had not providentially

looked down, nothing could have saved my life. This, however, is a digression.

I had formed a sporting acquaintanceship with a young Ceylon-born Englishman, who was employed in the Minor Roads of the Province. He was a good shot and a keen sportsman. What was more, he was always travelling in out-of-the-way parts of the district, with a gun in his dog-cart and a keen eye for game. If he saw snipe about, or a likely bit, he would jump out and walk through a few fields. If he found game he always loyally told me.

One day he drove into the Fort, and told me there were a lot of snipe at —, a place some dozen miles away. I agreed to come on a certain day, and we parted.

Accordingly, soon after four o'clock one mid-winter morning (which means there that the autumn rains being over, it is just beginning to get hot), I was sitting on the steps of my quarters, cursing the dilatory cab-driver who was to take me to E——'s. At last he arrived, and my traps—gun, lunch, and cartridges, not forgetting plenty to drink and ice—were put in, and we started off. We rolled out of the old Dutch gate of the Fort, and a twenty minutes' drive brought me to E——'s house. He was waiting for us, and we drove on without delay. At length the sun began to show light in the east, and E——, who had been directing the driver, pulled him up. Three or four natives, engaged by him, were near at hand, to act the part of retrievers and carriers. I gave my game-stick to one of my two, and cartridges and a

bottle of claret to the other, and putting our guns together we plunged in the swampy paddy-fields.* E——'s report was correct, and we were soon hard at work.

The paddy-fields of Ceylon, which are the ordinary haunt of the snipe, are generally covered with water at this season to the depth of about eight inches. They are divided by raised embankments a foot or two high, which serve to retain the water. Sometimes they are crossed by drains where the water deepens nearly to one's fork, and—but this is rarely—there *are* deep bogholes of unknown depth. The general level of rice-field is broken by patches of jungle, cocoanut plantations, or small grass-fields. On these latter, a so-called tame buffalo may often be seen grazing. As these are often bred by the simple process of driving the cows out to the wild bulls in the jungles, their temper is more than doubtful. I always carried a couple of ball cartridges handy, and though I never actually had occasion to use one, I often slipped them in in readiness. If one stands quite still, however, the lumbering charge generally slows down and ends in a stare, when the natives, to whom they are used, drive them off.

About eight o'clock we called a halt, for we were both thirsty. The water which at first had felt cold to the feet was warm enough now, and the rays of the sun were beginning to get strong. Our refreshments were obtained by the simple process of sending one of our attendants up a cocoanut-tree, whence he threw

* Paddy—native rice.

down two or three of the large green nuts. These were soon opened with the *catty*, or large knife, every Cingalese villager carries. Pouring off a third of the milk, we filled them up with claret, and thus obtained a deliciously cool beverage. Our refreshment was completed with a few spoonfuls of the soft kernel, scooped off with a piece of the husk itself.

For some time we now shot close together, and then separated to try different expanses of rice. Towards noon we met again and shot over a kind of wet field, bordered at each side by jungle. We had about shot this out, when turning round to direct the search for a lost bird, I was surprised to see snipe rise from the very spot where I had just passed. I called E——, and we walked back across the field. To our surprise, more birds rose than before. A third beat produced a regular plethora of birds—we could not load fast enough. To cut a long story short, this little field, for it was not more than two or three acres, provided us with good shooting till breakfast time. No doubt they had taken refuge from the sun in the jungles at the side, and run out at the sound of the firing.

It was about noon that we knocked off for that meal. We sat down on the carriage cushions in the shade of some huge trees. I cannot say that my appetite was ever very good on these occasions. The equatorial sun is sure to make itself felt in spite of the largest of *sola topees*,* partly, I think, because it strikes up in reflection from the water. But we en-

* Sun-hats made of pith.

joyed our iced claret and soda and our cheroots. We compared bags and found we had both done pretty well. Each of us had shot one or two specimens of the lovely painted snipe. Though this bird is in appearance a snipe, it is really, as its habits and flavour when cooked prove, a species of plover. Besides these birds, the paddy-fields hold numbers of white paddy-birds, plovers (known locally from their cry as "did-he-do-its"), snippets, golden orioles, kingfishers, and barbets of lovely colours, looking like animated jewels when on the wing. In crossing a drier bit quails sometimes rise, some of them being specimens of the tiny though delicious and prettily coloured "button-quail," no bigger than a man's thumb. Here and there one meets lizards, or rather iguanas, of gigantic size and loathsome appearance, which express their displeasure at one's intrusion by loud hissing. They are, however, harmless. Not so the snakes, at least not all of them, but these are fortunately not so frequent as stay-at-home readers might suppose.

After breakfast we worked large tracts where there were fewer birds, and the heat was decidedly trying. As a consequence, however, birds lay closer, and we worked steadily on till the cool of evening caused them to rise more readily. I began, too, to discover my cartridges were drawing to an end, and as I was shooting with a twenty bore, I could hope for no help from E——, who had a twelve. Towards dusk I took to picking my shots, so that every cartridge might tell towards the total. At last the lot were finished

and I returned to the carriage, and, emptying the luncheon box I had filled at midday, laid out my bag in tens. The exact total was forty couple of real snipe and three painted snipe.

E—— soon joined me. I forget his exact bag, but mine surpassed it. He had, I fancy, not used so many cartridges. This is the best bag of snipe I ever made. We were naturally both pleased. It was long after dark when we got home, pretty well tired out.

Next day everybody in the Fort had snipe for breakfast.

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST TIGER.

I HAD been in India some months, but, though keen enough on shooting, I had not succeeded in putting together much of a bag of big game, although I had arrived at the beginning of the hot weather, which is generally the best time for big game shooting.

My regiment was at the time stationed in Rajputana. The cantonment was one which had been established many years. Consequently, while the immediate neighbourhood had been thoroughly shot out by sporting privates and sergeants, all the available places within a fifty mile radius had been well worked by successive subalterns and captains. The result was that one had to go a long way before one could hope to find a sambur deer, and in India, *ubi rusa ibi tigris* (where the sambur is, there is the tiger) is a true saying.

Of course, I possessed that generally useless appendage, a *shikari* (native hunter). The first I owned, or perhaps I should rather say who owned me, was worse than useless, and I soon dismissed him. A little later in the year, a brother officer who

was going to the hills on leave turned his man over to me. This one was certainly the best *shikari* at the station, but I often longed for the "trackers" of Ceylon. Still, he had seen tigers killed, and was full of the glowing accounts of the sport he had shown a former master in some jungles fifty miles to the southward. Unfortunately, my Colonel was rather a dragon in the matter of leave, and it was out of the question that I could get away except from after my work on Saturday till daylight on Monday morning.

So the hot weather passed away without my being able to bag any more formidable specimens of the *carnivora* than the lynx, rather a rare animal in India, the leopard, and the skulking hyæna. Nevertheless, I did not neglect to make constant inquiries, and sent my *shikari* in every direction to search, stimulating his zeal with promises of princely reward (*i.e.*, from his point of view) if I should succeed in bagging or even getting a chance at "stripes."

At last, at the beginning of September after the rains were over, my *shikari* arrived at the bungalow as I was dressing for my evening ride. "What has he got to say?" I asked my dressing boy. "Says he got *khubber* (intelligence) of tiger, *sahib*, and plenty sambur." Now I had heard this sort of *khubber* before, and the tiger generally turned out to be a hyæna, or at best a leopard, both of which the *shikari* described as *chota bagh* (small tiger). So feeling decidedly sceptical, out I went to interview the dirty object squatting on the verandah.

“Well,” I said, “what *khubber* from Sendra?”

“*Sahib, burra bagh hi, bot sambur hi, bot sing wallah*” (sir, there is a large tiger there, and plenty of sambur there, many stags), was the answer, in villainous Rajput patois.

“*Burra bagh nae*” (not a real tiger?), I replied.

“*Atcha, sahib, burrawallah*” (yes, sir, a big fellow), excitedly.

“*Tūm dekka*” (you saw it?). My Hindustani was only what I had picked up from my *shikaris*, but they understood it.

To make a long story short, he stuck to his statement. He had not seen the tiger, but the villagers of Sendra had, though they had lost no cattle. This proved that the animal in question was a young and active tiger, for it is only such specimens that live on the deer. When he gets old and heavy, “stripes” finds the villagers’ lean kine easier to secure, or, more rarely, takes to preying on man. The *shikari* had seen the fresh pugs, and also declared there were plenty of sambur. This was obvious if there was a tiger, or the cattle would have paid toll. I had, however, some misgivings with regard to getting a shot; because I knew there was much jungle at Sendra, and as the waterholes were now fairly full the tiger might be lying anywhere. Nevertheless I decided to have a try, and sent the *shikari* off to ascertain if he could exactly whereabouts the tiger was lying, promising to join him at the end of the week.

Saturday morning saw my work over, and before noon I was breakfasting at Ajmere Junction. From

thence it is only a two hours' run to Sendra, a little Rajput village in British territory, lying at the foot of the barren-looking Beawar Hills. Here I took up my quarters at the dawk bungalow—an indifferent one and rarely used.

The *shikari's* report was that the tiger was to be found in the hills to the north of the railway line, which was sufficiently vague. I sent instructions to the headman of the village to furnish me with good beaters for next day, and not caring to lose the afternoon, I took my rifle, and with the *shikari* proceeded to some jungles on the south side of the line. After crossing this, we left the high-road, and taking a rough native track arrived at a hamlet of a few huts. Leaving these behind, we reached a small expanse of cultivated ground, surrounded by an amphitheatre of jungle-clad hills. I at once decided that here, at any rate, it would be a matter of great difficulty to get a tiger out, and that a regular army of beaters and half-a-dozen guns would be required. I found out the next day that the hills to the north are much less densely covered with vegetation.

We worked over this country till dark but saw nothing. The time of day rendered it unlikely that we should do so, but when out shooting I make it a rule to leave no stone unturned. We found plenty of recent traces of sambur, which confirmed part of the *shikari's* story.

When darkness fell, we were still far from the bungalow, and it was rather a weary trudge home. However, we met two natives with a *tattoo* (country

pony), on which I mounted and so returned. I suffered considerably from the animal's spine, for, like most natives' animals, it was anything but fat. The owner of the pampered steed proposed a deal, but I replied I was not using horseflesh to feed my dogs. He explained that it was not to eat, but to play polo on I should find it useful. Whereupon I gravely explained it was rather small for the purpose; and no doubt he asserts to this day that a *sahib* would have bought his pony for polo, if it had only been a hand higher.

Although the rains this year had not been plentiful in the district, they had unfortunately been sufficient to mature that pest, the abominable spear-grass. As I had been ill-advised enough to wear putties,* my shins and ankles were quite raw. There are two kinds of this detestable plant, but the effect of both is the same—*i.e.*, that the spear-shaped seed catches on one's garments and works through the thickest cloth, and even through the eyelets of one's boots, causing a punctured wound. Fortunately it only flowers after the rains, and is all gone by November. During the interval it is a perfect pest to the sportsman, and even to horses wearing bandages.

The next day, the 7th of September, I was up before the sun, and hastily disposing of my *chota hazri* (early tea), I followed my *shikari* to the place

* Bandages of cloth, similar to those used for horses, and similarly put on, much used by Europeans in India. They are worn by all branches of the army.

where the beaters were awaiting us. They were a stout lot of Rajputs, as far as I can recollect, some fifteen to twenty in number. Before commencing operations, I served out a gun-wad to each man as a voucher for his wages in the evening. Unless one takes this precaution the whole village turns up at pay-time. We then proceeded to the lower spurs of the Beawar Range. For some hours we beat on with absolutely no result, and it is still a mystery to me where the deer had all got to, for on my way to the hill I had noticed cultivated fields which they had worked till the ground looked as if sheep had been folded there.

At last the *shikari* posted me among some thick trees facing a steep hillside, down which a game-path led. I have often since thought what an awkward place that would have been if a wounded tiger had charged, as it was downhill towards me, and the trees and thorn bushes were so thick around and behind us, that we could not possibly have moved except forwards. Some such idea must have crossed my mind then, for I took my second rifle from the *shikari*, and laid it by my side. Before I had heard the beaters' shouts the *shikari* grasped my arm. But I had seen them too — three sambur hinds slowly descending the rocks, with their ears pricked towards the unusual noise behind.

"Shoot, sir, shoot," whispered the *shikari*. It was one of those tempting shots which females, and other animals one does not wish to shoot, always give. The silly creatures had stopped in an open space not fifty

yards away. Turning my head, I whispered to the *shikari* that, as I had often told him before, I would not shoot except at a stag. The deer moved quietly out of sight. Five minutes afterwards I heard a rush through the jungle. They had caught our wind and were gone.

The beat ended without any other incident, and not another deer did I see that morning, though one of the beaters showed me where a *sahib* had recently shot a stag.

So the day wore on, the beaters got slack, and nothing appeared. I always found that my beaters knocked up before I did. Considering they were "to the manner born," or rather, to the Indian sun, the extra walking that they had should not have produced this result. As a matter of fact, the Indian sun never, at the time at any rate, had any bad effect upon me. Even in May I could walk and shoot all day. In fact, I may say that the only disagreeable result of the Indian climate on me was that, in spite of incessant exercise at polo and every kind of sport, I continued to put on flesh at an alarming rate.

Seeing the beaters were beginning to straggle and keep bad line, I called a halt; and, sending the *shikari* to go with them and keep them in line, with strict orders to pick out bad beaters for reduced pay, I took a lad from amongst them to carry my second rifle. So we kept on for another hour, when I began to get sick of it. My cold tea was all finished, and the sun had long since passed the meridian. At last I despatched my gun-bearer to the dawk bungalow to order my servant

to be getting on with my breakfast, as I should soon be coming back. Another blank beat followed, and I told the *shikari* it was no use going on any longer. He was, as usual, quite ready to leave off. I then asked him, although I had a pretty good idea myself, whereabouts Sendra lay. He pointed down the hill we were then standing on, up the reverse slope of which the beaters had just come.

“Well then,” I said, “you can just beat it down to the bottom and then we’ll knock off.” So saying, I walked some way along the crest so as to skirt the piece I wanted beaten, before descending to the valley. Coming back along its sandy bottom, I faced the beaters, who were sitting quietly against the sky line. I held up my handkerchief and the beat began.

The hill I was facing was not of an even surface. From the crest, where the beaters had been waiting, three rocky spurs ran out towards me. Two little valleys were thus formed, and to my right of the last spur the hill ended in precipitous rocks. The little valleys of which I have spoken were full of thorny jungle, and at their lower ends some straggling thorn bushes ran down towards the dry torrent bed. Quite unbelieving as to the possibility of seeing anything more exciting than a blue bull,* I placed myself out in the open between these two lots of bushes, which doubtless owed their origin to the water-drainage of the little valleys.

The beaters advanced slowly, clambering over the

* The *nylghau*, a large antelope.

great rocks and rolling stones down into the valleys beneath, to the considerable danger of those men who were below them.

"*Aie! bagh!*" (oh! a tiger) came in a shrill yell from the valley to my right. I sprang behind the bushes to my left, expecting, however, to see nothing bigger than a hyæna. Then followed the usual appalling shouts as some more of the beaters caught sight of the moving animal, and the rest, who from their position obviously could not do so, joined in the chorus. Directly afterwards there emerged from the valley in question—a *tiger!* I had no doubt of that, though I had never seen one before, except in a menagerie. Startled from a well-earned slumber, he emerged, as I have said, with splendid bounds. Finding, however, that the cause of the alarm was only some men on the hill behind, he broke into a lumbering trot, which, as he approached me, lessened into that peculiar pace of the cat tribe that I can best describe as a "slink."

I don't mind saying that my heart beat quick. I fully realised that I was by no means in a good place to tackle a wounded tiger, and that I had only one rifle. But I had had some experience of big game in other lands, and I knew how rarely a wounded animal charges *back*. So, stooping forwards, I waited till the brute had passed me. Exactly opposite me was a small tree. I waited till the tiger's tail had cleared this. My 12-bore rifle was already at my shoulder. I pressed the trigger. The report was answered by a snarl; and a patch of blood showed at once behind the shoulder, but rather high up. The range was so

unusually short that I probably sighted a little too full.

Quickening his pace, the tiger made for some rocks in the river-bed. I dropped upon my knee and aimed again. His hind-quarters were now towards me, and, knowing from old experience that with a heavy rifle there is no more deadly shot than a raking one from behind, I fired again. Immediately the tiger rolled over, roaring horribly. After reloading, I moved cautiously towards him. He heard me, and turned his fore-quarters, trying to drag himself towards me with his fore-paws. Seeing that he was paralysed, I walked steadily towards him with the intention of putting him out of his misery. Just as I raised the rifle to do so the head dropped on his paws, and with a moaning sigh he sank on his side—dead.

I was soon joined by my delighted *shikari*, who knew this was worth a month's wages to him, and by the beaters, who rejoiced in the hopes of double pay, which they got.

The tiger turned out to be a young male, but full-grown and in perfect condition. A young tree was cut with the axe which I always made my *shikaris* carry. The tiger's feet were lashed together, fore-feet and hind-feet separately, and the pole was passed through them. It took a good many of the beaters to lift the tiger. However, they settled down cheerfully to their task, trotting along to the chorus of an extempore song, which reflected most scandalously on the tiger's relations and ancestors for many generations.

By two o'clock I had had my bath, and sat down

to my breakfast. Thinking it a pity to waste any of my short time at Sendra, I was ready again before half-past three, and went off to the south of the railway line. When we arrived at the hut of my acquaintance of the previous day, the owner of the pony, I sent for him. In answer to my inquiry if he did not know where the sambur that devastated his crops were to be found, he offered to show me a bit of jungle they often used. We started off.

Just before we reached the place, my guide and my *shikari* had got into an interesting discussion, probably on the price of grain, the usual subject of peasants' conversation in India.

"*Chooprao*" (shut up), I said, but it was too late. I heard a crash in the bushes, and, though with but little hope, ran on to where I noticed they were clearer, just in time to see a sambur stag bound out. I fired, and the stag dropped. It was a regular fluke, as he was shot through the back of the neck. He was a fine stag, and we soon had him gralloched. Meanwhile my old friend the pony had been fetched, and securing my quarry on his back, we returned to the dawk bungalow.

Dinner over, I felt quite ready for a sleep in the train when it arrived at a quarter past nine. But, greatly to my disgust, I found it was a local train, third class only. I promptly had an end compartment of a long carriage cleared out for myself and servants, but sleep was impossible, owing both to the discomfort of the carriage and the chatter of the natives in the other compartments.

All things, however, come to an end, and in a couple of hours the slow train reached a station some dozen miles from my bungalow, where I had a *tonga* or Indian dog-cart waiting. It was, however, obvious that this could not contain us all and my prizes. So I left my rifles, bedding, and servants behind, with orders to the latter to get coolies and follow in the morning. After securing tiger and sambur on the cart, I wedged myself in between them and reached home safely before half-past one, pretty well tired out. My rest, however, was only a short one, for I had to be on parade at sunrise, though feeling a bit seedy and feverish.

After parade my bungalow was besieged by all the youngsters in the station, who had come to view my prizes, and I dare say not a few of them envied me my first tiger.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEST RUN I EVER SAW.

MANY hunting men would find it difficult, I do not doubt, to say definitely which was the best day of their lives. Indeed there are many things wanted to make up a good run, and even more to make it an enjoyable. In the first place there must be a burning scent and hounds must run *fast*. Then you must have a good straight-necked fox, who must get well away without getting headed. Thirdly, your mount, "the fiddle to which you are the bow," must not only be as good as a horse can be, but he must be in good condition and fit to run for a man's life. Fourthly, your own nerve must be in rare order. There must have been none of those late hours and smoking-room symposia which make many a man inclined to "see what's the other side" of his fences. The man's condition must be equal to his horse's, or, when the former begins to fail, the latter can give him no help. The country must be favourable also, and nearly if not quite all grass. The fences, while big enough to weed out the *profanum vulgus*, must be neither unjumpable

nor wired. Lastly, while no "real good thing" ever had many "in it," there must be a few friends with you throughout to help you talk of "*the run*" for the rest of your life. Now let me turn to my old diaries and see if I can find you a run which answers all the above requirements. Ah! here we are.

No, I'm not going to tell you the name of the pack. As in my time I have hunted with more than threescore packs, it will, I think, be a little difficult for any of my friends to identify it without my assistance. From the Pytchley to the Coniston, from the Meath to the——but it's hard to say which is the most scratch of the many Irish scratch packs; you may take your choice.

The day was the 12th of April, a late one for hunting, but March had opened with a fortnight's frost, and the season was backward. The day was fine and pleasant, with just a touch of sharpness in the air to help us to forget that the next meet advertised ended with those ominous words, "to finish the season."

The meet was at —— Bridge, an old stone structure spanning a boggy brook, which flowed through a narrow valley. Many of the field had assembled thereon when the hounds arrived, so the Master, who hunted the hounds himself, stopped on the bridge. It was only just eleven o'clock. Presently an old hound got over the wall and commenced feathering up a boggy bit leading towards a small covert of gorse and rushes, the ground between which and the bridge was unrideable bog.

“Stop him,” cried the Master, “get off and stop him.”

A whip jumped off and went into the field. Two or three more hounds took this as a signal to join the first.

“Put ’em on to me,” cried the Master, “or they’ll be away.”

He rode across the bridge and turned into a field. Seeing the dismounted whip couldn’t stop the wanderers, he then rode down to the brook and threw the rest of the pack into the covert. Scarcely had he done so when a hound opened. The field hastened to follow the Master, for the ground was too boggy on the covert side of the brook.

Just then a hare broke away from the top of the covert and went towards the right. Directly after the leading hounds emerged on the very spot.

“Ware hare! Ware hare!” cried some of the field.

“Do be quiet,” shouted the Master.

Sure enough, when the hounds got a little way up the field they swung to the left.

“Forrard, forrard!” shrieked the Master, adding, “I *knew* it was a fox.”

It was now our turn to get “forrard.” A couple of trappy fences and a covert without rides thinned the field considerably, and at last some three or four of us only come down to the brook. It is boggy enough here, but we get over with a flounder, just as two more do so lower down.

We breast the slight rise which obstructs our view,

and there, at the far end of the field, are the tail hounds striving hard to join the body of the pack.

It is *ride*, now. Already Bob ——, the gentleman rider, has shot to the front on a thoroughbred. Presently we see the pack, close enough to be covered with the proverbial sheet, rising a slope. They are still a good bit in front. My old brown horse, the Leprechaun, has a season's condition and old corn to fall back on, but I am not going to press him. Steadily, steadily he gallops on, throwing his fences behind him almost without an effort. On, on, on. Grass fields, mostly big, and fences alone mark our course, while still, well in front of us all, the pack are fleeting along almost mute.

By Jove! how they do run! Not a hover, let alone a check, has lessened their speed since they left the brookside. Now I am on a piece of slightly higher ground, and have the whole panorama before me. Close to the hounds is Bob ——, with my friend T—— B—— in close attendance. A field behind is the Master, his four-hundred-guinea hunter fencing as if the sixteen stone odd on his back was a fleabite. I am still a field behind him; behind me to my right is a stranger, a Lifeguardsman, who generally hunts with a neighbouring pack. Further back still I see one other sportsman, but where are the field? Echo answers, where?

I lean forward and pat the old horse's neck. "Steady, old man, this can't last. They *must* come back to you. They've been running now for five-and-twenty minutes."

That was a trappy place! A cart-road with broad ruts, eight or nine inches deep, on the landing side of the fence; but the old horse generally has a leg to spare, and we are speeding on again.

The hounds are heading now for —— Great Woods, which are many acres in extent, and quite fill yonder punchbowl-shaped hollow. It is about half a mile across at the widest part. There are earths in those woods, and in April, out of consideration to the “teeming mothers of the vulpine race,” there can be no earth-stopping. Here, then, our gallop must end.

No; for see, the hounds keep away from the wood.

The fox has run parallel with its upper edge, and taken a semicircular course through the great grass-fields that surround it. He was too hot to enter the woodlands, so circled round them, looking and longing no doubt, and then held on again. Once more it is “forrard, forrard,” but nobody says so. Hounds are nearly running away from us as it is.

We learnt afterwards that the main body of the field, who had been thrown out at the boggy brook and thus left behind at the outset, had considered these woods the fox's most likely point, and had made straight for them. Scarcely had they got in sight of them, coming by the valley below, when they saw the hounds with their few followers swing round the top and disappear again. The pace we were going at may be judged from the fact that when they reached the top, having, as may be imagined, lost no

time in doing so, hounds and horsemen had completely disappeared again.

The woods then are left behind. Now we cross the only bit of plough I saw during the run. Surely the others are coming back to me now? Yes, I am in that field before the Master is out of it. A few minutes more and we are neck and neck.

"I wish I rode eleven stone," he shouts, as I top the next fence in front of him. This lands me into a long piece of poor land, studded with gorse bushes and slightly downhill. The other two are close in front now, and we have been running nearly three-quarters of an hour. We must kill soon. The only wonder to me is, how even such a gallant wild fox should have stood up before hounds so long.

The two leaders are pulling up and jumping off. Killed! is my first thought, but no, there go the pack as hard as ever. I gallop down to them, and soon see the cause of their getting off. The fence before them is a stone-faced bank with a few loose-looking sods on top. Before it runs a black-looking drain of some width, and for some distance the other side the ground is obviously boggy.

My right foot is out of the stirrup to dismount, when it suddenly occurs to me, why shouldn't I trust the old horse? No cleverer hunter ever was foaled in Ireland, it is soft falling at the worst, and if I do it I shall be alone with hounds.

So thinking, I cram him manfully at it. Lightly he changes his legs on the top of the fence, and, clever as a cat, drops into the far field clear of the worst of the

bog. Truth to tell, he does flounder a bit on landing, for forty-five minutes will tell on the best of condition, but I pull him together and skirt the steep hill before me. The other three, who have safely led over, are in hot pursuit.

A minute or two more and we come to a grassy lane closed by a hog-backed stile. It is small enough, but the old horse rattles it all round. The exit from the lane consists of another stile a foot higher than the former one.

“Rouse him up, Snaffle,” shouts T—— B——, who is close behind. For the first time that day the old horse feels the spur, and he bounds over the obstacle with nearly a foot to spare. A few yards on is a high-road. We emerge on it to find ourselves right among the hounds, who have checked at last. I pull out my watch; they have been running exactly fifty-two minutes.

The Master has his horn out directly, but his first forward cast across the road is fruitless. No wonder, for there is a small brook, by the side of which stands a fly-fisher, trying to look unconscious at the evil he has done.

Let us draw a veil over the Master’s feelings—and language. No harm was meant, and after all men have a right to fish as well as hunt—perhaps more in April. The mischief was done, the fox was headed, and the run was practically over.

To be sure, the now necessary back-cast hit off the line, but the scent was cold. There was no more

galloping; cantering, and sometimes even trotting, kept us with hounds for the next twenty minutes, while they patiently worked out the line. At the end of that time they marked him into a hole, which looked like a rabbit-bury, in a gorsy hillside. Who-whoop!

We all jumped off, though our horses had now pretty well recovered their wind. The Master looked covetously at the earth, but there is (or should be) no digging in April. We all agreed that it was a thousand pities hounds should lose their well-earned blood, but then again it was as well so gallant a fox should live

“To run again another day,”

and perchance to “teach the young idea how to” run also. Personally, I greatly doubt a fox being able to survive so terrific a burst. The run was in every way satisfactory. It was due to the Master’s knowledge of and confidence in his hounds at the outset. It combined all the requirements I have laid down as necessary to a good run. The Master of course must regret the absence of blood, but the season (his last, by the way) was all but over, and hounds had had blood enough.

The Lifeguardsman, after congratulating the Master on so good a run, started for his home, now many miles away; we five also mounted and moved off. Before we had jogged a mile we met the field, who of course at once commenced to depreciate the run, which, nevertheless, is fixed in my memory as “the best I ever saw.”

CHAPTER IV.

RABBIT-SHOOTING.

Is there a votary of the gun to whom these two words do not bring back a flood of recollections? True, they are mostly boyish ones, but are they any the less vivid for all that? Who does not recollect his first rabbit? I do certainly, as if it were yesterday.

I was nine years old, and just going into trousers. On that ever to be remembered Christmas Day, my father put into my hands my first gun. I can lay my hand on it now. It was, of course, a muzzle-loader, and single-barrelled. It was small and light, as suited my age, and it was, of all odd bores, an 18-bore. But it was, and is, a very good killer and a capital boy's gun. Unfortunately, we were in London at the time, and I could not get a chance of using it for a fortnight. The end of this period found me down at home, and waging an active war on all the blackbirds and thrushes within a mile of the house. One day one of the men on the place came up to me.

"There do be mostly a rabbut in the garden at the Elms, sir," said he.

Now the Elms was a smaller house of ours, at the other end of the property. It was at this time unoccupied. Not many days had elapsed before I had induced the speaker to make time to go down with me. We took a terrier with us.

The garden in question was surrounded by a wall, and had only one gate, opening into an orchard.

“You’m best stop here,” said the labourer to me, “an’ I’ll take Nip into the garden. If he’m there, he’m bound to come out of gate. He do mostly be among the cabbages.”

I ensconced myself carefully behind a large apple-tree and waited. Presently I heard the terrier yelp, and my heart beat quick. Yes, there was the rabbit. He came slowly out under the gate and crossed the orchard. Just as he passed me, he sat up to consider the position. That sealed his fate; bang went the gun, and my first rabbit rolled over squealing. Need I say how I rushed towards him, and danced round him, while dealing him blows with the gun-stock that would have killed a wolf? Then I held him up in triumph; surely the finest rabbit that ever was seen. Looking back by the light of past experience, I am inclined to think it was really rather a diminutive specimen. Up came my grinning ally and the excited dog. Then, of course, I hastened home to dash into the drawing-room and display my booty to everybody. Since those days the old home has been filled with many an antler and many a skin, but I doubt if one of them has given me the pleasure to obtain that my first rabbit did.

But to get back to the present. Rabbit-shooting appeals to all classes of the English community, especially since the passing of the Ground Game Act. Bunny is not despised at the biggest pheasant shoot; in rough shooting he adds materially to the weight of the bag; the farmer looks upon him with especial affection; and he is the natural prey of that inextinguishable biped, the schoolboy. To look back to the recollections of those holiday shooting parties, when the eldest of the "guns" could scarcely count his three lustres, makes one shudder with horror, and wonder how any of us ever returned to our mothers. The guns that went off accidentally, the reckless shooting, and the still more dangerous moving about in covert that went on would have turned the hair of an adult sportsman gray.

While one or other variety of the hare is found in almost every part of the world, the rabbit is, I believe—or rather was, until the recent too successful attempt at acclimatisation in Australasia—confined to Europe. Of all the European countries which I know, it is most generally distributed in England. It is true I read in the Austrian shooting statistics for 1890 that 83,687 rabbits were killed there during the year, but the detail shows that of this total the three adjoining provinces of Lower Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia are responsible for 82,503. While four provinces are entirely rabbitless, four more show totals not exceeding twenty head. The provinces named above show also the highest totals for pheasants, partridges, and hares, which prove that they are, according to English

ideas, the most highly preserved. Many Continental sportsmen object to rabbits, which they say disturb the hares by their restless habits, but I doubt much if this idea is well founded. Others urge, with more probability, that the buck-rabbits kill the leverets.

Of late years some enormous bags of rabbits have been made in England. I have often been surprised that Australia has not overtopped these, but perhaps the reason is that the rabbits there being destroyed in every way, in and out of season, it would be difficult to arrange a shoot at which the bag would total up to six or seven thousand head. The New Zealanders have been wiser in their acclimatisation, their pheasants flourish exceedingly, and the red deer are also doing well. But why should they stop there; they have Alps and glaciers, surely the chamois and ibex would succeed among them?

Not the least amusing form of rabbit-shooting is that which is obtained when the reaping machine is at work. As it continues its clattering circle, the ground game draw together in the middle of the cornfield, and there they sit so close that I have actually known a hare bound up in a sheaf by a self-binding machine. But as a rule, when only some half to a quarter of an acre remains to be cut, they begin to bolt freely, generally on the opposite side of the field to that the machine happens to be on. The farmer or his friends are generally ready, and there is a good deal of "independent firing." Great care should be taken, however, that the horses are not likely to take fright at the sound of the guns. A ghastly accident happened from

this cause not long ago, the driver of the machine being thrown from his seat and fearfully injured, if not killed, by the knives.

Another common and favourite way of shooting rabbits is with ferrets. As long as the rabbits bolt freely and the ground is not too open, the sport is good enough. But as a rule the rabbit gets bothered by the noise of the guns and declines to bolt. Result: a ferret "lying up," a long delay, and considerable boredom.

Another, and to my mind the best of all ways of getting sport out of the rabbit, consists in stalking them with the rifle. As the sun begins to sink low in the summer evenings, the rabbits sit out in dozens in the meadows. The stalking required to get within fair rook-rifle range is not very great, but it gives an interest to the affair, and a rabbit is a smallish mark for a bullet. I need hardly say he must, if near a burrow, be shot through the head or heart, or he will infallibly escape. The drawback to these small-bore rifles is that they are difficult to clean, and the grooves of the rifling lead up very fast, producing most eccentric shooting.*

Before going to stalk rabbits with an unknown rifle, it is always time well expended to fire half-a-dozen shots at a mark, on a board. Even if the rifle is by a good maker it is possible the sights may have got knocked somewhat to one side. Besides, one wants to know whether one should take a fine or coarse sight. I recollect going out once with a

* See "Hints on Equipment."

borrowed rifle and missing six or seven consecutive rabbits. I then put a mark on a wall and fired at that. This showed me the sighting was all wrong, but consistently so, every shot going five inches over the mark. I then recommenced, aiming below every rabbit (or at the hind quarters if they were sitting up), and did not miss another. How well do I remember my wrath once on firing five shots lying down without being able even to frighten the rabbit I was firing at. The target test revealed the shooting of the rifle to be utterly unreliable, the grooves being quite leaded up. Finally, it may not be superfluous to add that in thickly populated countries, like England, all rifle-shooting should be practised with the greatest caution.

Although the rabbit is generally only looked upon as a useful contribution to the bag at an all-round covert shoot, there are some places where he is alone, or principally, the object of the guns' attention. Of such Rhiwlas, in North Wales, was long considered the chief. It has, however, been recently (in 1892) eclipsed by an English estate which yielded over seven thousand rabbits to the gun.

A number of ingenious methods for making rabbits "lie out" were given in *The Field** in the year 1891. The simplest method, and that most usually practised, is merely to ferret all the burrows, and having ejected all the inhabitants, to block them out by placing in the mouth of each hole a split stick, holding a piece of white paper, which has been saturated with

* "Letters to Young Shooters."

kerosene oil or some similarly strong-smelling compound. Alarmed by this strange object, which is terrifying both to the sense of sight and that of smell, the rabbits will not attempt to re-enter the burrow. It then only remains to hope for fine weather till the day fixed for the shoot, and, provided there are plenty of rabbits on the estate, a good day's sport can be confidently relied upon.

Nor is the "harmless necessary" bunny so easy to shoot as may be imagined. For the guns who may be posted in fairly open ground there is no difficulty. But it is often the case that some one must be placed in a narrow "ride," where the rabbits go across like lightning. Or the post may be surrounded with clumps of young brushwood, which are sadly apt to receive the charge of shot intended for "brer rabbit." Many men, who make a very fair show among the heather or turnips, are sadly bothered by the rabbit's idiosyncrasies, especially if they have not had much practice at them lately. After a few years in India, I must own myself to having performed very badly my first day or two among the bunnies.

Let me put my old diaries under contribution again for a day's rabbit shooting. Ah! here is one, on which driven rabbits, which had been previously ferreted out, formed, if not quite the sole, at all events the principal contents of the day's bag.

In the month of October, 18—, I received a letter from an old friend and brother officer, asking me to come down to his place on the Gloucestershire and Somersetshire border to shoot at the end of the

month. He went on to say, "There are a good many rabbits." I was glad to accept, and at the appointed time, after a tedious cross-country journey, found myself at my friend's hospitable abode.

The day fixed for the shoot was the 29th, and many anxious looks were turned to the barometer, for a wet night would inevitably ruin a shoot of this kind. But the clerk of the weather was kind and the day fair and mild.

We were five guns—all soldiers—and consequently punctuality was the order of the day. The ground to be beaten consisted almost entirely of larch and fir plantations. Most of these were strips, some of great length. We began on a beat of this kind: two guns being posted outside the end, one (myself) inside, while two more walked down outside in line with the beaters. The beat had hardly begun when a hare came down through the small firs towards me. A shot in the head sent her rolling over and over, and by this time the other guns were also at work. This little strip yielded several hares and some rabbits.

So we worked on, till towards lunch-time we reached a fir wood—a stronghold of the rabbits on the estate. This was driven to a point where a stone wall facilitated the covering of it by two guns, the rest of us advancing in line with the beaters. The firing grew quicker, till a woodcock got up, and was marked down. The beaters were stopped while one of the guns walked up to the place, but missed the cock. Then we moved on again. At last we came up to the spot where the other guns were hard at



work. We stopped, too, on the edge of a sort of natural hollow, or punch bowl. The bracken here was simply alive with rabbits, and they were beaten out, not singly, but half-a-dozen at a time. It was load and fire, load and fire, as quickly as we could, now. At last the rapid firing slackened, and died out.

“Now let’s have lunch,” said our host, turning towards where the ladies were already awaiting us. There were some pheasants in this wood, and just before we reached the luncheon baskets somebody put up a hen. Taken by surprise, or—but why make excuses for bad shooting? The fact is, I missed her with both barrels, and somebody “wiped my eye.” Consequently I sat down to lunch in rather a bad humour, which soon passed off.

After lunch we finished that wood, and then proceeded to a piece of quite young larch which hardly overtopped the long rowen grass. Here we got some more hares, and, to everybody’s surprise, a woodcock.

The next beat was half a wood of tall firs and other trees, with plenty of brambles and undergrowth. We did fairly well here, too. In the middle of the beat a woodcock got up near me, and went straight down the ride where I was posted. Up went my gun, and just as I was going to press the trigger, to my horror, I saw two ladies who had foolishly been allowed to come to the end of the ride. The woodcock went off unshot at, and I dare say neither of them ever knew how near they were to—well, say disfigurement, just then.

As if to make amends for this disappointment, in

beating the last half of this wood I got the very best place. The rabbits came out in a string; and as it was a sort of clearing, and they mostly slowed up to look about them, there was less than no excuse for a miss. When the beaters reached me, I had a regular fortification of rabbits and a couple of hares piled up all round me.

About this time the hundred cartridges I had brought out were all done. My host's brother handed me a couple of handfuls. They were Schultze. What a relief they were. My head had begun to ache from the continual firing. I had then, yielding to old-fashioned prejudice, never used wood powder. Since that day, except when no other was obtainable, I have never used black powder.

At last our day began to draw to a close. We had still an **Γ** shaped belt to beat, the lodge gates being at the end of it. As we worked along it a cock pheasant came out and I dropped him. There was no one near me, so I picked him up to throw him to one of the beaters in covert. As I did so I noticed he was a very fine bird, with spurs about half an inch long.

"That's a patriarch," I said to myself. It was fated that *this was not the last I was to see of that cock pheasant.*

As we approached the lodge, the trees got higher and the pheasants came thicker. For a little while the shooting was very pretty, but there were unfortunately not many birds. Most of them were laid out on the grass when the last shot was fired.

After dinner that night we were asked to go out into the courtyard to see the game laid out. It made a very fair show, totalling up two hundred and twenty-three rabbits, nine hares, twelve brace pheasants, one woodcock, and one woodpigeon; total, two hundred and fifty-eight head.

Next morning was showery, but one or two of us responded to our host's call for volunteers to go out and look after the cripples. We got three pheasants, three hares, and forty-two rabbits, making a grand total of three hundred and six head.

A day or two after I left my kind hosts, and returned to my bachelor quarters. "I've put some birds in the dog-cart," said H—— to me. When I was ensconced in the train I proceeded to stow my luggage. One of the pheasants caught my eye; a horrible foreboding seized me. Yes, it was—*my friend with the long spurs*.

Was it three or four weeks I hung him? I forget; but this I recollect that even then his legs were so tough as to be uneatable.

Take him all in all, the rabbit is an inhabitant of our fields and woods every Englishman would be sorry to miss. Even to the non-sportsman they form a pleasing object feeding out by the hedgerows on the summer evenings. Fortunately he is an animal almost impossible to exterminate.

CHAPTER V.

BLUE BULL STALKING.

THE worst of the Indian summer was over ; the rains had cooled the air a little, and brought back the green to the trees and dusty plains. Personally I would rather have had the dry heat continue, even with a higher thermometer, the damp heat being more trying and far less healthy. Cholera rarely makes its appearance till after the rains. For the rest, life was as dull at —pore as it surely can only be in the Indian plains in the hot weather. Of the score and a half of brother officers, whose names appeared in the Army List, half-a-dozen were in England, and of the rest half were up in the hills, dancing and flirting at Simla or Mussoorie, or shooting in Cashmere or even Thibet. Consequently those left in mess, perhaps eight or nine without the married men, got rather sick of each other's company, and looked eagerly forward to the Sundays and Thursdays, which brought some change by enabling them to get away from their station for the day. Especially did the sporting contingent, not just then very strongly represented in

the regiment, look forward to the day of rest and to the "soldier's holiday."

I had worked all the neighbouring jungles and plains that I knew of, and was just wondering how I could manage to get four or five days' leave to open a campaign against a "very large tiger" (they always are "very large" till they are shot), which had been reported to me at a place on the railway about a hundred miles away, when a remark of our quartermaster's put an idea into my head.

"Ever been to Bir?" he asked, and on my replying in the negative he proceeded to describe it as a sort of earthly paradise, and yet only five miles distant from barracks. This was good enough for me if there was only something to be shot, so I sent my *shikari* off to ascertain. In a day or two he returned and reported plenty of nilghai in the Forest Reserve, near the bungalow.

Nilghai are not considered very high class game in India as a rule, but they very frequently provide uncommonly good sport in British Territory. In the Native States they are ridiculously tame, and moreover the shooting them is very likely to lead to serious trouble with the villagers. In case they may not be familiar to some of my readers (and last time I visited the Zoological Gardens the Society had only a calf there) I propose to give some account of them.

The nylghau is the largest of Asiatic antelopes, being only approached in size by the rare oryx, which frequents the Arabian desert. In fact, it is the largest

of all living antelopes, except the monstrous eland of Southern Africa, from which it differs greatly in the fact that its horns, unlike those of the eland, are very short, never exceeding nine inches.

In general appearance they resemble the cattle of the Channel Islands very much, and it is small wonder that the Hindoo natives of India should be deceived by this and by their very cowlike long tails into including them in the reverent protection they afford to the sacred cow.

In colour the bulls are of a blue gray, whence their Hindostanee name, *nyl-ghau*, blue bull. The cows are of a rich chestnut brown, and both sexes have curious white marks about the legs and fetlocks. The bulls have a long fringe of hair hanging from the under side of the neck, and this part was formerly much sought for by natives to cover shields, the throat ornament forming the boss in the centre. They are not, as will be seen hereafter, so strictly nocturnal in their habits as some of the deer tribe. They frequent rocky hills covered with thorny jungle, and in spite of their awkward and cowlike appearance, possess considerable activity and speed, so much so that even the sure-footed Arab horse finds it difficult to follow their head-long gallop, and it is only the oldest and heaviest bulls that have ever been fairly ridden down and killed with the spear. The horns, though short and pointed, like those of a bull, are put on like those of an antelope, meeting slightly towards the tips. Any one who has once seen the head of a blue bull will readily understand the remark of a well-known sportsman, who,

meeting one for the first time face to face on a lonely track, in the dusk of evening, incontinently took it for Old Nick *in propria personâ*. The cows have no horns.

* * * * *

Connected in my mind with the blue bull is one of those memories of past misery, which, acute as it was at the time, is only recalled now to be laughed at. The story dates from the days of my earliest "griffinage," when I was willing to take the word of a worthless *haremezadeh* (scamp), self dubbed *shikari*, as to the presence of game in any place, and also as to the best way to get at it.

Not to make my story too long, I had been in India about six weeks when the bazaar loafer in question persuaded myself and P——, another greenhorn, of the presence of large quantities of game in a district some fifty miles off.

Our troubles began early. Arrived at the end of our railway journey, no coolies were forthcoming, and a couple of valuable hours were thus lost. Towards dark we were persuaded by the cause of all our woes to disregard the local knowledge of the men we had with difficulty enlisted, as to the route we should follow. The result of this was that, when the path we were following came to an abrupt end at the top of a rocky pass, we had to camp there, waterless, and this in an Indian May! Lest I should be misunderstood, I hasten to add that we had plenty of soda-water, but we had to leave camp at five a.m. without tea and unrefreshed by a wash.

The information as to game turned out to be on a par with that as to our route. Except a couple of gazelle we saw nothing for hours. At last I got a long shot at a nylghau and missed.

The cup of our misery was, however, not yet full. Nine o'clock came ; then ten ; the sun was high and the heat intense. But our horses never arrived. We had ordered them to skirt the rocky range we had walked across and join us at a certain village.

At last we started off, fasting and without any supply of drink, to tramp fifteen miles across a roadless plain of deep sand intersected by countless nullahs. The memory of that walk is still to me as a hideous nightmare. After several miles of plodding through the hot sand, with parched throats and aching heads, we arrived at a well. Regardless of the obvious dangers of such water, we drank freely and sluiced our heads and shoulders ; but for this I doubt if we should ever have reached, as we did, a large native town some miles further on. Here we obtained a native vehicle, which conveyed us to a dawk bungalow some eight miles off. At last we were able to drink and sleep, for eating was out of the question. We rested till towards evening, when, having had some food, we started for home—still nearly a score of miles away—in a pair-horse conveyance we had hired.

Fate had hitherto done her worst by us, but apparently she now relented. About five miles from home we had to ascend a steepish pass, and got out to stretch our legs. Seeing a large number of partridges

about, we got out our guns and commenced shooting as we walked.

Presently I shot one, which towered, and topping a low hillock fifty yards from the road fell among some jungle beyond. The *shikari* went to fetch it, but to my surprise on gaining the crest of the hillock he dropped down and crept stealthily back to us.

"*Sahib, sahib, byle hai,*" (sir, sir, there are cattle—*i.e.*, nylghai—there).

My plan of attack was soon made. The wind blew from our right, so I ordered the *shikari* and P——'s gun-bearer to go to that end of the jungle as soon as we had placed ourselves quietly at the other. As we went I slipped a ball cartridge into each barrel of my gun, preferring that weapon to the single .450 in the carriage.

A couple of minutes after we had taken post a herd of five nylghai broke from the covert, and passed us at a distance of some seventy yards, going at a lumbering trot.

Picking out the biggest one, I fired, and heard the spherical bullet tell loudly. Blood showed at once, but a little high and far back. My second barrel missed, as did P——'s only shot, and the herd disappeared round a corner of the rocky hill. Reloading, I started to follow them up, but almost at once our driver in the road below shouted: "He's down! He's down!" I hurried on to give the *coup-de-grâce*, but it was unnecessary, for twenty yards further on lay my first blue bull, stone dead. The next job was to get

him down to the road, nearly a hundred feet below. After gralloching him, I cut off the head, which with some nine inches of neck was as much as ever P—— and I could carry down between us. With the assistance of some passing natives the *shikari* rolled the carcass down the steep hill, and with great difficulty we managed to raise it sufficiently to secure it to the hind axle and springs. These proceedings took us a good deal more than an hour, and it was nearly nine o'clock before we reached our station.

* * * * *

Nylghai have one great advantage over every kind of Indian deer and antelope with which I am acquainted, in that their meat is excellent eating. Indeed, I know very few things much better than a well-corned round of blue bull beef. Sambur is practically uneatable, and spotted deer, antelope, and gazelle are dry and tasteless. To my mind the most toothsome of all Indian animals is the porcupine. But I am digressing from my subject.

Having got leave without difficulty, I and a non-shooting companion started in a hired *tonga* or Indian dog-cart, about half-past five the evening before. This left us about an hour's daylight, which ought to have been ample, but unfortunately neither we nor the driver knew the road; and going on my general knowledge of the whereabouts when his gave out entirely, we wandered on through cotton-fields and across dried-up torrent beds until long after dark. However, all's well that ends well, and at last we reached

the bottom of a steep avenue which wound up a hillside, at the top of which we could see the white bungalow. Up and up the road wound, and as the precipitous bank was entirely unprotected, it may be imagined that we lost no time in jumping out when the *tonga* ponies, by commencing to jib, gave us a hint that they would prefer a lighter load to drag up. A few paces more brought us to the house, which, except in its situation, did not differ greatly from most dawk bungalows. This particular house of call, however, not being near a high-road, was not primarily intended for travellers' accommodation, but for the use of those officers of the Irrigation and Forest Services whose duties called them to the spot.

It was dinner time when we arrived, and before very long we were seated at table in the verandah, enjoying the lovely scene which lay before our eyes. To the right and close to the bungalow itself, lay the *bund* or embankment of the tank, a gigantic wall of masonry some two hundred yards long and perhaps seventy feet high, backed by the dark foliage of a mango tope. The tank or lake which was formed by this wall was extended at our feet, and ran up as far as we could see to our left, where it wound out of sight, thus giving the impression of a much larger sheet of water than I afterwards discovered it to be, for it really ended just beyond the corner. The clear rays of the moon showed up the water and the steep hills that enclosed it, but as they did not expose the arid and sterile nature of those hills, the *tout ensemble* suggested one of the minor lakes of England.

I had to be up early next morning, so did not devote too much of the evening to the view. We made for our beds, but not to sleep much, for some wandering member of the local *fauna*, a hyæna I think, disturbed us twice by entering one of the bedrooms before morning.

After despatching my morning tea, I handed my two 12-bore rifles to my *shikari* and a villager he had brought with him, and started. First of all we crossed the embankment, and, following a little bay of the lake just opposite the bungalow, we plunged into the hills. Half an hour's walk took us into the Forest Reserve, a jungle consisting principally of thorny bushes. Here the *shikari* had some more men waiting. A hurried consultation took place, resulting in a further move across the broad vale we were in.

At last the man who had accompanied us pointed to a swell of the ground just in front, and the *shikari* whispered that the herd was just beyond that. I crept silently to the edge and peered over. Yes, there they were, feeding dispersed among the bushes some seventy yards away. Quietly I took my second rifle from the *shikari*, cocked it, and laid it beside me. About in the centre of the herd were two bulls, conspicuous by their light colour. I aimed behind the shoulder of the nearer one, and, seeing him fall to the shot, I dropped the other with my left barrel. Then I caught up my second rifle.

"Shoot, *sahib*, shoot," cried the *shikari*, as a large nyghau crossed an opening in some bushes nearly

a hundred yards off. I need hardly say that by this time the herd were in confused flight, not knowing whence the danger threatened.

"But it's not a bull," I answered, for I could see no horns.

"*Atcha, sahib, byle*" (yes, sir, it is a bull).

This statement, and the large size of the beast, convinced me I was mistaken; so I fired, and, though I struck it, it continued to move off. The left-barrel dropped it, but it got up and moved slowly on. Reloading as I went, I ran swiftly after it. As I reached the top of a low hillock, I saw it descending just in front of me. Aiming over the root of the tail, I sent it rolling to the bottom of the slope, and following it up I found—as I had now realised—a remarkably large, fine cow. She made an abortive effort to charge me, but I soon put her out of her misery and returned to look after the bulls. To my intense disgust I could find neither, and my assistants seemed not to have taken the least trouble to ascertain what had become of them.

I was greatly provoked, as I have the strongest objection both to killing the female of any harmless game, and to wounding any animal and failing to bring it to hand. Every circumstance combined to increase my annoyance on this occasion. The cow when cut up proved to be in an interesting condition, and contained two fully developed calves. Furthermore, my *shikari* reported that he had seen a bull with a broken shoulder in an adjoining jungle the day after. A very small amount of common sense on the man's

part at the time would have enabled me to follow it up successfully.

I may here remark that I beat this same jungle again a fortnight after, and found only cows and calves, into shooting at which I was not again misled. This unfortunately only confirmed my belief that neither bull could have survived his wound.

There being some *chamars* (members of the leather-dressing caste) among the men, I set them to work to skin and cut up the cow, which was far too heavy to be moved. Nobody having any idea where the wounded bulls had got to, I could only order the men to beat out all the neighbouring jungles, a proceeding which resulted in my seeing nothing but two hyænas.

About two o'clock I gave it up in disgust, and returned to the place, whence, the skinners having completed their work, a string of coolies was just starting off with the meat. Every rock and hill-top all round was black with vultures and kites waiting for their turn. I returned to the bungalow for food and rest.

In the evening I walked all round the tank without seeing any game, and as I was returning I heard a curious whistling and splashing, for which I had some difficulty in accounting. Presently I perceived a number of otters making the circuit of the tank. As I wanted a skin for my collection, I crouched down behind a bush and waited. On they came till I could count them. There were no less than twelve. As they got near me one of them raised himself half out of the water, as if to reconnoitre, and I shot him.

Silence followed the echoing report, but in a few minutes I could hear the others whistling and calling far up the tank.

After dinner we started for home in the most brilliant moonlight, which made the road, or rather track, as clear as daylight would have done. The driver had previously made inquiries about his route, so we had no difficulty in finding our way this time. An hour later we were at home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BADGER, AND HOW HE IS HUNTED.

“You don’t mean to say that dog can draw a badger?” asks the swell in one of John Leech’s inimitable *Punch* pictures, the dog in question being a woebegone and attenuated little bull-terrier, little bigger than a rat.

“Lord love you, sir, it’d be a little holiday to him,” is the answer of the ever-ready dealer.

Although every dog-dealer in London can produce a dog which he will warrant will draw a badger, in my opinion the dog that will do so has never yet been seen. It is true the dealer will often offer to show his customer the dog performing the feat in question. Should the latter assent, an adjournment is made to the rat-pit, which, however, is probably as often used for the illegal amusement of dog-fighting as for its ostensible purpose of ratting. A badger is brought in and placed in a barrel, and the dog, being loosed, after a short worry ejects the “brock.” Nevertheless the whole performance is a farce. The badger is half tame, and thoroughly accustomed to the transaction. Being naturally an inoffensive animal, he

probably considers it policy to come out and have it over. Moreover, if its mouth were examined it would probably be found that its formidable canine teeth had been cut short off. Besides, the barrel, in which the dog can get alongside its quarry, bears no resemblance to the deep and narrow hole in which the wild badger is found. There he often lies on a sort of shelf close to a sharp turn in the hole, so that his adversary, if he has the courage to force himself in, can be readily seized before the dog has any chance at all to use his weapons of offence.

No; I maintain that the dog which will enter the earth of a wild badger and fairly draw him—*i.e.*, drag him to the light of day—is a fictitious and imaginary animal. It is true that within a week of penning these lines, my dachshunds (German bred ones, the English bred are useless underground) did bring a badger so far out that I was able to put a charge of buckshot into him, when he bolted and met his end after a terrific worry. The case was altogether an exceptional one. The badger was surprised, I fancy, in a new earth which he was in the act of enlarging, and the dogs got him out, not by holding him, but by going for him occasionally and then retiring, which so irritated him that he finally rushed headlong on his fate. This is the only time I have ever seen a wild badger come to the light of day, but it is easy to judge from the sounds of subterranean war that the badger makes frequent charges upon his foes, and, to judge from the resulting yells of pain, not without effect.

One clear proof of what I urge may be found in

the fact that German sportsmen, who in many branches of sport far surpass the English in woodcraft, train their dachshunds in accordance with my theory. If the dog is intended for fox-killing he is trained alternatively to bolt, or lie up with, his quarry. I mean that the same dachshund is never taught both methods. If, on the other hand, he is intended for badger-digging, he is only taught to lie up close to his game, giving tongue till his master comes to his assistance. In fact, it is all he can do.

I must confess I have a sneaking liking for "Friend Isegrim," as the Germans call the badger. The gamekeeper pursues him furiously with traps and other abominations, but I think he is more sinned against than sinning, and that the harm he does to the game is very trifling. Like most of the bear tribe, of which he is the only surviving member in the British Isles, and, with the exception of the Pyrenees, in Western Europe, he feeds principally on roots, berries, fruit, and fungi. It is given to few people to see the badger in a wild state. It is, perhaps, more than any other animal, strictly nocturnal, returning to its earth long before daybreak. Sometimes, but very rarely, it lies out for the day in thick covert, and I have twice seen one killed by a pack of fox-hounds. It was wonderful how little impression twenty odd couple of hounds made on that tough carcass.

I am unable to say exactly how far the habitat of the badger extends to the eastward, but it certainly ranges beyond the limits of Europe, and is mentioned

by Wood in his delightful book, "Bible Animals," as occurring in Syria. Are we not told that the tabernacle used by the Israelites in the desert was made, or lined, with badger-skins? It is hardly necessary to say that the zoology of the translators of Scripture was most defective. In many other places where we find the word "badger" in our English version, totally different animals are meant, but in the text I refer to, it is probable that the translation is correct.

Among other slanders from which the poor badger suffers, is that which imputes to him an offensive smell. "To smell like a badger" has passed into a proverb. The fact, nevertheless, is that in its wild state the animal is not offensive, and the erroneous idea has probably arisen from the experience of observers who have only seen them in a state of confinement. Most animals when shut up in a small hutch or barrel would be equally objectionable, and many probably more so.

Before going on to treat of the methods of hunting the badger, I propose to point out a simple method by which any person sufficiently interested in the beast and his ways can get a view of him in his native wilds. The first thing is to locate the animal. If in walking through the woods we come across frequent deep hasty scratchings and overturned stones, we may feel sure that we are on the feeding-ground of the badger, and, therefore, not very far from his abode. Careful observation will often show the regular beaten track the animals use to reach the earth, but if not, a patient search of all the steepish banks and

hillsides will ere long reveal the hole, generally situated under a rock or tree-root, and plainly marked on the outside by great masses of recently excavated earth. We must take our chance of its being occupied, for to put a dog in might possibly cause a migration. If there are, however, several distinct burrows, all but the freshest may be disturbed with a dog, as this will increase the chance of our selected earth being inhabited later on. If the excavations are fairly fresh, or wet or snowy weather enables one to see the marks of quaint-looking plantigrade feet and long claws, we may assume that the badger is at home.

The next step is to go away and wait for a fine night with an early moon. We need not be on the spot till nightfall, and must then take post, *down wind*, for no animal has a keener sense of smell than a badger. Lying down on a rock or hillock will do, but a seat on the limb of a tree some little way from the ground is best of all. With luck we shall not have very long to wait till a curious gray and white striped head appears at the mouth of the hole, and sharply-pricked ears and sniffing nostrils inquire if all is safe. Then the curious old-world form emerges. The back is covered with that long gray hair, which is best known to the public from its appearance in shaving brushes, but the legs and abdomen are black-brown. The body slopes upwards from nose to quarters, which themselves end in a ridiculous little tail, like everything else about it entirely disproportionate to the rest of the animal. The first badger will probably be followed by two or three more, for

they are gregarious animals, and as many as six or eight have been found in one hole. After some preliminary shakings and grumblings, they move off with their queer shambling gait, and disappear up their path to seek their food. Then you may go too, for they will not return till dawn is near at hand.

Now, supposing that my readers, like most of the Anglo-Saxon race, after they have found a wild animal, are not happy till it is killed, let us see how we are to compass the capture or the death of the badger.

The most common, and on the continent of Europe the universal way of getting the badger, is by digging. It was by this means, and by trapping (but the badger is a crafty gentleman, and by no means easy to trap), that no less than four thousand one hundred and ninety-nine badgers were brought to land in the Empire of Austria in the last year for which the official figures are yet published.

The process is simple enough. All that is required is a dachshund trained to the work, digging tools, and a pair of tongs constructed to grip an animal's neck. As I have already said, the dog must be trained to lie up close to the badger and give tongue continuously. He must not close with him, and must retire before the badger's charges, returning again as soon as they are over. Above all, he must never leave the spot to seek his master or to get fresh air. Should the badger turn tail in order to dig or escape, the dog must at once, by seizing him, prove the futility of the attempt.

Supposing that the dog, being slipped into a hole,

gives tongue loudly. This means he has found his game. The assistants then begin to dig, endeavouring to come upon the hole at right angles, and if possible between dog and badger. When they do so, the dog is first removed, and the badger extracted with the tongs. In England he is generally put in a bag, and often sold to dog-fanciers for the purposes I have before alluded to. In Germany, unless required for the training of young dogs, he is more usually knocked on the head. The skins fetch a good price, and in some districts it is the custom to decorate the off-horse in a waggon with one on the housings of the collar. The fat is also valued. For this reason, badger-digging in wine countries takes place at the vintage season, when they are very fat, for they do great havoc among the grapes. The fat makes first-rate dressing for boots, and is also supposed to be excellent for rheumatism, which, by the way, is said of tiger's fat in India. The meat is eaten by the foresters, and is not unpleasant, though it has perhaps a slightly musky taste. It is only fair, however, to say that the specimen I tasted was a very old one, with hardly a tooth left in its head.

In the way I have described we secured no less than thirty-four badgers in an English western county in a few months. They were afterwards let go in the open and hunted with a pack of fox-terriers. The sport they gave under these conditions was only moderate, and disastrous to the dogs, which were often cruelly mauled. I have known a badger bite a terrier clean through the jaw, taking away a couple

of teeth. Another dog, which was bitten in a hind foot, never put it to the ground again.

It was obvious that this was not the way to proceed, and the question arose: How could we fairly *hunt* the badger? The solution was not very difficult; as the badger was never abroad by day, he must be hunted *by night*.

I will pass over our preliminary experiments, with their attendant failures and successes, and give an account of one of our best evening's badger-hunting.

Soon after eleven o'clock we left the smoking-room, not without some regrets for its comfortable arm-chairs and cheerful fire, and retiring to our rooms, proceeded to exchange our comfortable smoking-suits for breeches, leggings, and shooting-boots. It was a lovely October night when we left the house, and the frost was fairly sharp. A brisk walk soon brought us to the wood where we meant to hunt, just as a clear autumn moon began to appear over the hills. Here we found the keeper and his assistant, with three couple of dachshunds. The keeper now left us, but I propose to follow him in spirit, so as to explain his proceedings. His first step was to go direct to the earth which he knew the badgers were then using, proceeding as quietly as possible. Here he took from his pocket a stout bag made of sacking, and closing at the mouth with a double line, on the principle of an ordinary sponge-bag. This bag was pushed into the hole so that its mouth coincided with that of the earth, the strings being attached to pegs firmly driven into the earth. A couple of thin pegs

lightly hammered served to keep the upper edge of the bag against the roof of the earth. These arrangements being completed, the keeper had only to take up his post to leeward, and preferably in a tree, as before described. When he was ready he blew his whistle.

Its note is a welcome sound to the rest of us, who have grown somewhat chilly with waiting. In answer thereto we proceed to uncouple the eager hounds, who dash into the covert. For a minute or two all is still, then "yap! yap!" a young hound opens on a rabbit, but the old ones know better what their quarry is to-night. We walk quietly up a ride towards where they are trying. "Yap! yap!" again, and presently old "Waldmann" endorses it with his deep "yough! yough!" that makes the silent woods ring. We run up the hill and find the little pack pushing their game through a thick covert of young firs.

"Tallyho! tallyho!" screams one of the boys, who has run on to the top of the plantation. Joining him, we learn that he has seen a badger cross the line of bright moonlight that strikes close to the root of a big oak. In a minute the eager pack fly to the holloa, and putting their heads down, scurry off on the line with a burst of music. After them we go, getting many a scratch and tear from branch and thorn. The badger is a sly old veteran, and by no means intends to disclose the whereabouts of his earth directly he is found. So he makes for the edge of the big wood, and for a moment we fear he is a traveller and will

cross the fields to some unknown stronghold. No; he turns inside the fence, and the scent improving enables the hounds to push him along more briskly. He crosses the wood and makes for the stream at the bottom, hoping no doubt that the wet and marshy ground will spoil the scent. It certainly does not improve it, and a hare crossing the line leads some of the hounds astray, but the veterans will have nothing to say to it, and we are luckily able to stop the others. After a short check the old hounds open again, and, fresh-found in a thick bramble patch, the badger has no resource but to set his head for home. Away he goes, and just as he reaches the mound of earth before his hole, the keeper leaps out from his place of concealment with a shout. The fright prevents the badger from examining the burrow, and he dives headforemost into the bag. Next minute the keeper's whistle informs us he has him, and we, too, make for the earth. There we find Velveteens holding up the bag by the strings, with the eager hounds snatching vainly at it. We sit down panting and wipe our foreheads.

“Good badger this, gents,” says the keeper; “weighs over two stun’, I warrant. Must have run near on half an hour, too.”

“Have a drop of whiskey, keeper. Who’s got a light? One o’clock! that’ll do for to-night, anyway.”

We depart homewards, the keeper’s boy with the sack on his back. It is absolutely necessary that a captive badger should be placed in a building with a stone-paved floor. Should the floor be anything less

substantial, the great claws will have helped their wielder to his freedom before morning. The amount of digging a badger will get through in a few hours, even in such hard ground as may be found in the foundations of a stable or outhouse, is incredible.

It is often asked why the badger should, if he is really no foe to the game, be molested at all? In England the reason is simple enough. If there are badgers about they spoil the fox-hunting. The earth-stopper goes his round towards the small hours, putting together all the earths he knows of. A fox, rather inclined at all times to sleep the day away in the open, never disturbs them, and when the hounds are after him has no time to do so. With the badger it is just the contrary. When he returns home and finds his hole closed, a very few sweeps of his claws lay it open again. The result is that, when the hounds are put into covert, instead of the eagerly-expected "Gone away!" before the fox has once traversed the wood, it is "Who-whoop! gone to ground!" and the sport is probably spoilt for the day.

It is impossible to write of the badger, and badger-hunting, without speaking of his natural enemy, the dachshund. Originally descended from the old German beaver-hound, which was used for bolting that now extinct animal, he has now come to be considered, as his German name imports, the badger-hound. On the Continent of Europe there are few dachshunds that will not go into any earth and face fox, badger, or otter. Unfortunately in England the

reverse is the case, and I doubt if at any London show one dog in ten could be found to go underground at all. The reason is not far to seek. In Germany all the dachshunds are in the hands of sportsmen or foresters, and those which are useless for sporting purposes are very likely to be knocked on the head in early youth. Among Englishmen the dachshund is treated as a fancy dog. All we ask him to do is to attain a certain standard of looks. He may be, and often is, as soft as a lap-dog. In Germany, besides the standard of appearance, there are practical tests at shows with fox and badger in artificial earths. But above all there is the great fact that the dachshund is as much kept for sport there as the foxhound and pointer are among us. The result is that, if we buy a dachshund in Germany, it may not be a perfectly shaped animal, but the odds are ten to one that it will go into any earth, and if it is a female the odds are twenty to one.

My object, however, is not to write a treatise on the dachshund, but to speak particularly of his uses, and principally of his hereditary employment, that is, work underground. To show what good dogs will do I subjoin an account of a morning's sport in Germany.

“The day appointed for the badger hunt turned out a lovely autumn morning. The grass and bushes were covered with myriads of glistening cobwebs. Apart from the sport it was a pleasure to be out on such a morning. The old forester was waiting for us, attended by two sturdy woodcutters, and with his

dachshunds, Hansl and Peter, in leash, and eagerly straining to be free.

“ It took us nearly an hour to reach the earth which the forester declared the badger was using. It was situated under an old tree-stump in the midst of a thick plantation of young firs. The dogs were loosed and darted with weasel-like rapidity into the hole.* Beside it were a couple more holes, which we stopped in case of a bolt, and then the digging tools were got ready.

“ Now the sound of subterranean barking became distinctly audible. We listened intently with our ears close to the ground. It was obvious that the sounds came from an immense depth, and the keeper’s face showed that this wouldn’t do at all. The barking increased and decreased by turns, and occasional yelps of wrath and pain showed that the conflict was not confined to mere verbal demonstrations.

“ At last there were sounds of rapid movements, and the cry of the dogs, which had been temporarily interrupted, broke out doubly loud and evidently much nearer to us, and again the sounds showed that the badger was at bay. Now the forester’s face was wreathed in smiles, and he gave the order to commence work. The stump gave some trouble, but, half-rotted as it was, it soon had to yield to the mighty blows of the woodmen. As soon as it was thrown on one side the work went on merrily.

* The practice of slipping two dogs into a hole together is, nevertheless, rightly condemned by the best authorities. The presence of the hindermost prevents the foremost from retiring before the badger’s charges.— *Snaffle*.

“When the diggers had got down about four feet they suddenly came upon a slab of rock, which was obviously too big to lift. The forester swore roundly. Fortunately when it was clear we found a vulnerable part in the shape of a deep crack, into which a crowbar was soon driven. Both men got hold of the bar and, by pulling and pushing at it till all their muscles cracked and their faces became almost black, they managed to move a part of the slab. Finally it was loosened and carefully raised out of the hole towards us, who were waiting to receive it.

“Now a thin layer of earth alone separated us from the dogs, whose zeal and noise were stimulated by the knowledge that help was at hand. Indeed, one of them was spurred on to undue rashness, as his yelps of wrathful pain showed us. Now mattock and pickaxe are plied with a vengeance, the forester, who alone is not in a state of excitement, begging the men to be careful of the dogs.

“At last the pick goes through, and a dark opening yawns before us. We have reached the hole and can plainly hear the growling of the disturbed hermit. A dog shows himself at the opening. Blood and dirt make it impossible to say which, but the forester swiftly seizes him, and in a minute he is making the wood ring with his yelpings, being chained to a tree close at hand.

“‘If we only had Peter out now,’ says the forester.

“Forthwith, before he can be warned, one of the woodmen throws himself on the ground and gropes down the hole with extended arm.

“ ‘ Oh, Lord! Oh, murder! Let go, you devil! Oh, dear! Oh!’ shrieks the rash victim of his own folly, and, pulling out his bleeding hand from the hole, he proceeds to dance about like one possessed.

“ He had come on the wrong animal, and instead of the dog, which was lying further back, had grabbed the lord of the castle himself, and the latter had resented his interference with his usual energy.

“ Now the forester himself lies down by the hole, tongs in hand. For some time the badger resists, by furious biting, all attempts at capture.

“ ‘ Now I’ve got him. One of you get the pickaxe, and when I pull him out let him have a good one on his neck.’

“ The man is pulling with all strength, but the badger is struggling for liberty and life, and only loses ground inch by inch. At last the striped head comes in view, and one vigorous blow puts an end to all his troubles.

“ When he is fairly out, Peter comes in sight, holding a firm grip of the badger’s hind-quarters. The badger is a very fine one, and being weighed afterwards turned the scale at twenty-nine pounds.

“ Now the earth is carefully shovelled in again, for badgers are often got out of the same hole year after year, and we start for home. The wounded woodman has to stand a lot of bad jokes upon his keenness.

“ Who would not love the little crooked-legged allies who show such courage and devotion? Nor are they alone useful for this purpose, for there is hardly any-

thing to which the dachshund cannot—with kindness—be brought.”

I cannot conclude better than with the following quotation from Corneli's excellent book, “Der Dachshund,” of which it is to be regretted no translation exists :

“The principal use of the dachshund is underground, and of our German breeds he is *the only one* which can be used for this purpose. Whether the safe earth is in rocky cliffs or crumbling sand, in the open field or the sheltering covert, the little hero alike forces his way in to bolt his foe, or with loud voice to notify his presence to his master. Besides this we find him used for hunting,* when his presence does away with the necessity for beagles. He chases the savage boar, and brings the monster to bay, albeit the latter disregards his puny antagonist. Again, he can follow the blood-trail of a wounded animal. He shows an equal aptitude for each of these employments, and is lively, courageous, and untiring.

“Besides all this the dachshund is a reliable and attentive watch-dog, very clever, and—if properly trained—a very obedient and deeply-attached dog. If he is ill-treated he shows it by following badly and being rebellious—a sign of honourable feelings and distinguished ancestry. With these many good qualities, and the quaintness, nay, even comicality, which is peculiar to him, it is surprising that the breed was neglected so long.”

* The original *Stoberarbeit* is untranslatable, and means noisy work—*i.e.*, hunting with plenty of cry.

These words were written nearly ten years ago. Since then, I am thankful to say, the dachshund has ceased to be a fashionable breed. May we not hope, now he is only to be found in the hands of those who love the breed, that, as in Germany so in England, he will be bred in future for use as well as appearance. No dog is more easily trained; the book I have quoted gives full directions. Sir Walter Scott puts in the mouth of honest Dandie Dinmont an excellent precept for training puppies: "I had them a' regularly entered, first wi' rottens—then wi' stots or weasels—and then wi' the tods and brocks—and now they fear naething that ever cam' wi' a hairy skin on't." This is the way to enter dachshunds, only the smaller animals must be placed in holes of gradually increasing depth, till by degrees the youngsters are brought to face, in his own domains, their hereditary foe—the badger.

CHAPTER VII.

ROE-DEER SHOOTING.

IT must, I think, be a matter for regret in every sportsman's mind that this quaint little deer should have so nearly disappeared from the British Isles. I must confess that I was under the impression that with the exception of a few in the New Forest, it was entirely extinct in England, although plentiful in the Highlands of Scotland. I recently read in *The Field*, however, that "there are plenty of roe-deer in Dorsetshire, in the Blackmore Vale country"; and the author of that most delightful sporting book, "Short Stalks," writes to me, under date 7th April, 1893, as follows: "I have introduced them—(*i.e.*, roe-deer)—successfully into Epping Forest, and an Easter Monday tripper of an enquiring mind may see them any day."

Still, to the bulk of our English sportsmen, the roe is an unknown animal, and that it should be so is, I must say, a wonder to me. In the first place they can be cheaply bought on the Continent; secondly, they are not given greatly to wander from any fair-sized wood where they are turned down; thirdly, they do little, if any, damage to crops; fourthly, while they

afford a pleasant variety to the bag in winter covert-shooting, they also provide a delightful amusement to the sportsman who is content to do a little quiet stalking along the edge of the coverts on a summer evening; and lastly, they are delicious eating, when properly cooked.

The roe abounds on the Continent of Europe from the most westerly provinces of Spain, and eastwards as far, certainly, as the Almati Mountains in Central Asia, where large bags are made by the Russian officers. The methods of shooting them are generally the same, and as these are brought to the highest perfection in Germany, I propose to describe them as practised there.

There are four recognised methods of roe-deer shooting known to German sportsmen—*i.e.*, *Treibjagd* (driving), *Brackjagd* (hunting to the gun with hounds), *Birschgang* (stalking, practised principally for roebuck in the summer), and *Blättern* ("calling" the bucks, in the breeding season). The finest bucks are obtained by the last two methods, especially the latter, which is, however, repellent to our English ideas of sport, and the venison so obtained is, of course, rank and worthless. I propose to take each of these separately, and will begin with what in point of season comes latest in the year—driving with beaters.

As in English pheasant-shooting, little driving is carried out till the leaves are off the trees. Unfortunately the roebuck's horns are shed with the leaf, so that it is very rarely the case for one of these quaint little trophies to be obtained by driving.

This also makes it difficult for the unpractised hand to quickly distinguish the buck from the doe.

The driving is conducted in the ordinary manner, the best results being obtained by the employment of few and quiet beaters. If these will only keep good line, and move steadily on, an occasional cough or remark from one to another, with a still rarer tap of the stick or whistle, will bring the game to the guns, whereas a noisy, shouting gang will certainly have the effect of causing the wary deer to break back through the line of beaters.

Sometimes hounds are used together with beaters, a practice I would not recommend, although it was in such a drive I saw my first roe-deer killed. It was in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, smallest of European states, that this took place. I was passing some time there, principally with a view to wild boar-shooting, as to the goodness of which I had received a very exaggerated account. Not long after my arrival I was invited by a local hotel-keeper to join what I afterwards found out to be little more than a well-to-do peasants' shooting-party. There were half-a-dozen guns, as many beaters, a couple of cross-bred beagles, and several nondescript curs. Though we began to shoot before nine in the morning, by lunch-time we had only bagged some half-a-dozen hares and a fox. We stopped for lunch by the gigantic root of a fallen forest-monarch, which made a very good table. Unfortunately, the owner of the beagles neglected to secure them. The result was that no sooner had we comfortably settled down to

lunch than the cry of the hounds reached our ears. One or two of the sportsmen jumped up and seized their guns, loading them with large buckshot. Scarcely had they done so when a roe appeared, heading straight for the lunch-party, and then stopped, listening to the beagles behind. Somebody fired, though it was a longish shot, and the deer went off slowly to the right followed by the hounds. Soon the cry ceased, and presently the young dog returned covered with blood. Search was made, and the buck, with the old bitch still tearing at him, was found lying dead. Later on in the day we got a second. It is useless to multiply accounts of roe-driving, as, in the first place, it is a sport regularly practised in the Scottish Highlands, and secondly, it can readily be imagined by any one who has taken part in an English pheasant-shoot, only supposing every tenth hare to be a couple of roe-deer, for they rarely go alone. I need hardly remark that in driving the shot-gun only is used, and the usual charge is No. 2 in the left barrel, and No. 4 in the right.

Before I had had many weeks' roe-shooting, I had made up my mind that in order to thoroughly enjoy the sport it was necessary to employ hounds. This is a form of sport with which English sportsmen should be familiar in theory, for there are some capital descriptions of it in St. John,* and to those who are not acquainted with his fascinating works I would say, "Get them at once." St. John used foxhounds as far

* "Wild Sports of the Scottish Highlands;" "Sportsman," etc.; "Tour in Sutherlandshire."

as I can recollect. Different sportsmen have different ideas as to the best breed of hound, and much depends upon the nature of the coverts. When they are really forests a large hound is necessary, and the process is a little tedious, because the hounds take the game right away, and sometimes do not return for an hour or more. The best sport is enjoyed in coverts of a hundred acres or so. Long prices are paid for dogs which combine the qualities of drawing wide and hunting far enough, but not too far. The usual breed is a variety of our beagle-harrier, but I prefer the dachshund. I may at once add that I do not believe any English dachshund would do for the purpose. I have never known one with nearly enough music. It is a difficulty to get a dachshund to draw far enough away from the gun, but many will do it, and I have one with as deep a note as any southern hound. I do not believe, however, that these very deep-voiced dachshunds are ever much good underground, but one cannot have every quality combined in one dog. Given then the properly qualified hounds, the sportsman, or sportsmen, go quietly into the wood and take up their places where experience proves the game most frequently passes. The dogs are then slipped, and not only do they draw the covert immediately round their master, but a good dog will draw the entire wood blank before returning to the gun. If he finds anything he pursues it with plenty of tongue. The best dogs are those which follow it up long enough but not too long—say half to three-quarters of an hour. In this time, if they are well posted, the game should

have passed the gun or guns. Although this is to my mind the most delightful of all the methods of roe-shooting, in the eyes of the tenants or owners of shootings it has one great drawback. They say that the roe-deer, if they are thus harried with hounds, will assuredly abandon the coverts in which the chase has taken place, for a time at least. My own experience is not sufficient to warrant my contradicting the assertion, but I was the lessee of one covert which was almost always good for a find once a week. It was, however, somewhat peculiarly placed, and embraced a deep-wooded valley containing a brook and two ponds, the upper one of which never froze. Brambles there were, too, in plenty, and their leaves are the favourite winter food of the roe. Lastly, there was a small warm plantation of firs, which a few years before had been noted for pig, but which had since been thinned. As the valley was little more than a furlong from a town and railway station, I thought little of it from a shooting point of view. Winter, however, began early that year, and after a few nights' frost I bethought me of my unfrozen pond, and taking down my gun, walked off to the valley to see if there were any duck about. A dachshund followed me. I found no ducks; but hardly had I passed the last pond, than the little hound commenced to feather busily about, and went off full cry, disappearing over the hill-top to my left. I heard him tonguing merrily along the crest, then he descended into the glen nearly a quarter of a mile up, rose the opposite hill, and was lost to the ear as well as to the eye. The

little stream joined a river a hundred yards below the ponds, and therefore it was quite likely he would return on the near bank. It was bitterly cold, but I waited patiently. Sure enough I soon heard him again coming through the woods by the river. Thinking only of a hare, I stepped quietly out of the firs on the far side to get a clear shot. Standing thus in the open, I heard something gallop down over the shoulder of the hill and halt among the firs. Every sound was audible on the hard-frozen ground, so I knew it could not be a hare. I stood motionless, the hound was apparently at fault. Yough! yough! he opened again, the footsteps recommenced, and a roebuck cantered out within ten yards of me, only to go down with a charge of No. 2 behind the shoulder. It was not a large one, but quite as heavy as I cared to carry the short distance home.

This happened on the 23rd of December. On the following 6th of January I again had a successful run, this time with two dachshunds, in the same locality. As I walked up the valley I noticed some woodcutters at work by the lower pond, so I gave up the idea of seeing deer that afternoon. As the sequel will show, I was mistaken. The hounds took up a line at the top of the little fir-wood, but were soon at fault, and making sure it could only be a wandering fox, I turned back, leaving them trying about. Partly for warmth and partly from old habit, I walked through the young firs under cover instead of down the path outside. Just before I reached the place at which I had killed the last buck, I happened to glance up at a high cliff which

ran out into the glen. There to my astonishment stood a roe, or rather it was just turning away to rejoin others whose sterns were vanishing behind the rocks. Eighty yards—it was too far for a shot, so, whistling loudly, I proceeded to clamber up the cliff, heedless of its frozen and slippery surface. The red dog, unfortunately a mute runner, reached me first, so I secured him till his fellow also appeared, and at once opened on the line. Scarcely had I loosed the dogs than I heard a shout from the woodcutters, and turning towards the valley spied three roe-deer, buck, doe, and yearling, ascending the opposite slope. They had doubled back close behind the cliffs and crossed just above the ponds. The hounds were right too, for I saw them straining, neck and neck, across the little valley. One moment I took for reflection, then deciding that the odds were in favour of their taking the pass at the top of the glen, I slipped and struggled down the cliff again and ran up the valley as long as my breath would last. The last hundred yards or so was done at a walk, but all was still when I arrived, and posted myself so as to cover the path through the wood. Presently I heard the hounds on the top of the hill, and sure enough the pattering of the deer's feet in the dead leaves followed. This time there was no delay, they broke out of the wood at a gallop. Shot through the head, the buck rolled over and over, while the doe, who had had the left barrel, held on. She was rather far from me. For a minute or two I stood still, and then with glad regret I heard the poor beast cry in the wood some twoscore yards on, and knew it,



HIXON

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too, was "my meat." I whistled and the red dog came. I laid him on her line, and directly after I heard the short "yap! yap!" a mute dog generally gives when his game is in view. A mad rush through the underwood followed, and then I heard the deer cry again, and running up found the dog had got her down. I soon put her out of her misery. Fortunately the woodcutters had a barrow, and the deer were soon safe at home.

It might be imagined that the valley would now really be abandoned by the deer, but as I have said before, it remained good for a find at least once a week, and that in a country where roe-deer are not really plentiful.

Now let me change the scene and take my readers to the shores of the lovely Lake of Constance, where I first was initiated into the mysteries of the *Birschgang*. One evening does not vary very greatly from another—it is hardly necessary for me to say that roe-stalking can only be practised in the early morning and late evening, and I prefer the latter—so I will describe an evening which happens to be fresh in my memory.

I left my temporary home about half-past six, and half an hour's walk brought me to a large wood. My first turn was through beeches, under which the dead leaves crackled sadly, but I made the best of it. However, I saw nothing, except the fresh marks where a buck had been turning over the leaves. Ten minutes later I descend a steep hill; from the bottom of it rises a corresponding slope, but covered with hay grass. See, a roe takes two or three bounds up

it. It heard me, but it is only half frightened, for it stands and listens. Quick! the opera glass. Yes, it is as I thought, a buck with fairish horns. Taking a rest against a friendly tree, I draw a bead. Nearly a hundred and twenty yards, I think, so sight full. Crack! the Express bullet goes true; the buck with one spasmodic bound falls dead. I go across to him, thinking to drag him under cover, but luckily espy a distant peasant, who promptly undertakes to fetch his cow-cart, and convey the buck to my house. Perhaps I shall have another, I think. I turn to another quarter of the wood, and am encouraged by the sight of a doe's tracks in a damp rut, quite fresh. Not ten minutes have elapsed, when I think I see a move at the bottom of the slope I am on. Is it, or is it not a buck I see? Yes, and there is a pair of ears pricked forward, and no doubt the eyes under those ears see me a deal better than I see them. I quietly feel for the glass, but the movement is enough. There is a rush into the thicket. Never mind, it was only a doe, I feel sure, and they are sacred for two months more. For half an hour more I keep on the move, but see no more deer that night. What I did see was a woodcock—a sufficiently uncommon sight in June.

On my way home I overtake the cows.

“*Ein starker Bock,*” says the driver (a fine buck). It is a goodish buck with six points. This is the normal number, but these deer vary more than any others in the shape and angle of the horns. Frequently the upper point appears in front as well as

behind. They are then known to German sportsmen as "cross-bucks."

The finest heads are obtained by the process of *blättern* or calling, the only method of roe-deer shooting of which I have still to speak, and this because, especially where there is a large head of roe, the shooter can practically pick and choose his bucks. I use the word "shooter" advisedly, because I cannot bring myself to speak of the practice as sport, and I find that the best German sportsmen agree with me. What would be thought of a man in Scotland, who hid himself and called up the deer by imitating the bellow of a rival? Yet this is a favourite method in Germany. The definition of sport seems to be this—endeavouring to compass the death of an animal by pitting our science against the peculiar qualities with which nature has endowed that animal for the purpose of protecting itself. Thus in stalking the natural wariness, in snipe-shooting the twisting flight, in coursing the speed, in fox-hunting the cunning wiles, are the attributes against which we have to contend. In "calling," however, there is no such triumph. Lured by the passions, the hapless animal rushes headlong to its doom. However, as I have already said, no description of German roe-shooting would be complete without reference to the *blättern*. I propose therefore to give some account of it.

The call used for the purpose is a little instrument some inch and a half long. The squeaky noise it emits is the imitation of the call of the doe, for there

is this distinction between calling the roe-deer and the stag, that the former is attracted by the voice of a possible mate, the latter by that of a presumable rival.

Although the roebuck bears a character for conjugal fidelity which he has won by attaching himself to one doe, not only during the rutting season, but throughout the year till the fawn is born, his virtue is not equal to resisting the temptation. Frequently his own doe appears first, drawn no doubt by the desire to know what rival is attempting to seduce her lord from his allegiance. The buck has two distinct methods of approach. Either he bounds gaily and rapidly to the spot, or he creeps warily from tree to tree as if he were himself stalking the sportsman.

The recollections of such "sport" vary little. I will endeavour to pick out a couple, which possess an interest of their own.

On one occasion I had successfully plied the lure, and a good buck had listened to "the still, small voice." He seemed, however, somewhat suspicious as to the identity of this closely-hidden female, and kept himself concealed among some young beeches, so that I could not get a fair shot. At last I made out a good bit of his shoulder and let drive. The buck bounded off and the second bullet went anywhere. I reloaded rapidly, thinking he would cross a clearing on the crest of the opposite slope. Sure enough he appeared there, and, what was more, stopped. I had put the second sight up, and, "drawing a bead," was just about to press the trigger, when the buck col-

lapsed—stone dead. Had he fallen one half-minute later I should have prided myself on a long shot—for the distance was at least a hundred and seventy yards.

Another time, when I had called in vain for some time, I met with a surprising answer. With a faint bleat a tiny fawn trotted up to me, saw me, and fled. Again I called, and again the little beast appeared, examined me, stamped its tiny foot, and fled. The third call produced the same result. This time I moved a step towards it, stamping my foot loudly. It fled headlong, and I did not see it again. It had evidently lost its parents, and, as my calling had no other result, they must have moved some way off. It could not have been two months old, yet its distrust of man was fully developed.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHOOTING TRIP ON THE WEST COAST OF CEYLON.

IT was many years ago, in the seventies, I think, that the facts I am about to relate took place. My old and valued friend, Will B——, occupied at the time a position of responsibility in the Judicial Branch of the Civil Service at Colombo. It was not a post which did justice to his abilities nor to his activity, which a score of years' consecutive residence in the low country of Colombo had not impaired. Alas! it did impair his constitution, for he returned to England some half-a-dozen years after only to die. Light may the earth lie on the best of good fellows, lightest-hearted of Irishmen, and truest of friends!

“I am getting pretty sick of Colombo and the Courts,” said he to me one day. “Let's go for a trip somewhere.”

“All right, if it doesn't cost too much,” said I.

The next question was where. After some discussion we decided on the west coast. Our plans were soon made. They consisted in starting from Negombo, connected with the capital by a line of steamers, and working up the coast, completing our trip so as to return to one of the coast ports in time

to catch the monthly Colonial Government steamer which would bring us home. Leave having been obtained from our respective chiefs, we proceeded to get our tents and other equipment together.

A few days before our start—which, by the way, was to be made on Christmas Eve—a letter came to Will from a native, or rather half-caste subordinate, in the Government Agent's Office at Negombo, who, hearing we were coming, wrote to offer to arrange a drive for us on the day after our arrival. Will had been stationed at the place some years before this, and was of opinion that the writer was a sporting chap, and would probably get us some shooting, so we accepted the offer. This involved sending tents and servants on the day before with instructions to pitch the camp near the spot where the drive was to take place.

At last all was ready, and early on the day fixed we drove down through the unsavoury native town to the jetty in the river. The steamer, a little ramshackle affair with wheezy engines, was crowded with natives, but a place was soon cleared for us, and we started. The first part of the route is up the Kelani-ganga river. Before we had gone a quarter of a mile we ran aground on a sand-bank. The crew and several of the passengers jumped overboard, and after unheard-of exertions got her off. When the steamer was at last got off the screw refused to move, a rope having fouled it. It took another ten minutes to cut this away, and I began to think we should never get fairly started. At last, however, we sighted the Leper

Hospital, which marks the entrance to the long canal which unites the river with the Lake of Negombo. The canal is monotonous and uninteresting in the extreme, but it enabled us to have our breakfast in peace before we emerged into the lake. This is, properly speaking, a lagoon, as it communicates with the sea. On this occasion it was decidedly rough for inland water, and there was a strong breeze blowing right in our teeth. The steamer puffed and snorted, but made little progress. I had rolled up my shirt-sleeves for coolness, regardless of the spray which blew over us at intervals. I was, however, to have cause to remember it. At last we reached our destination some three hours after time. We amused ourselves in the evening by watching a cricket match between native teams, and "doing" Negombo, a dull little place, but prettily situated. When we went to get ready for dinner at the rest-house,* I found my hands, arms, and face were becoming intolerably painful. The sun and wind aided by the salt spray had made them almost raw. Will was also suffering, but not so badly. Fortunately the Government Agent's wife kindly sent us some glycerine and rosewater, which allayed the pain. But for this I hardly think I could have continued our journey, and as it was I could hardly bear my coat on for some days. The Ceylon sun is quite powerful enough without salt water; I

* A rest-house is the Ceylon equivalent of the Indian dawk bungalow, only it is better furnished. Both are substitutes for hotels in their respective countries, if that can be considered an hotel which provides neither food, drink, nor bedding.

have often had my sleeves burnt red through a drill coat when out shooting.

Next morning we were up betimes, and after a hasty "early tea" we found our host waiting for us with a ramshackle dog-cart. He was one of those Portugo-Dutch-Cingalese so common in the island, his name Fernandez de Silva. He was very talkative and a keen sportsman. He was very proud of his "breech-loading rifle," which rather amused us. The rifle had evidently been a single-barrelled muzzle-loader, to which an ingenious native had attached a Snider action. In this he used Snider cartridges, but as the bore seemed to me to be rather more than .577, the bullets must have taken the grooving very little. However, as will be seen, he managed to kill something with it.

After a tedious drive, changing horses half-way, we reached the place where the beaters were waiting. Several of them, to my horror, carried old muskets and came round begging us for bullets. I gave one of them a 12-bore one which was much too large for his gun, but by cutting slices off it he hammered it down on to a handful of powder.

The ground we were to beat consisted of some tracks of high jungle adjoining the cocoanut plantation. I was posted where a sort of path formed an angle, and the other two guns went on. The path was so narrow that it was obvious the rifle would not be of much use, so I put buckshot cartridges in my gun and leant the rifle against a tree. All was silent.

I wonder has anybody ever described a curious

phenomenon which I have often in my young days noticed when big game shooting. You stand waiting for, perhaps, half an hour, till suddenly changing your direction you see among the trees the object of your search. So it was with me in this case. I looked to my right, and there, looking straight at me in the bushes, was a noble axis stag. I could see him so distinctly that I could almost count the points on his horns. I half raised my gun, but how unnaturally still he stands. Am I deceived? Surely not. Yet something tells me not to fire. At last I aim and whistle. Not a movement; and then the horns gradually dissolve into branches, the outline of the limbs is made by growing trees and a stump, the very sparkle of the eye proves to be a dewdrop. It is almost difficult now to distinguish the outlines which had so nearly deceived me.

Hark! a shot from the beaters and a shout recall me from my reflections on optical delusions, and I hear something coming hastily through the bushes. A spotted stag with his antlers laid back springs into the path, only to go down with a broken shoulder. Running up to him I perform the last rites. Before the end of the beat a porcupine, with his ridiculous quills rattling with wrath, bustles into the path. He is good to eat and a deadly enemy to the young cocoanut-trees, so he gets the contents of a barrel in his head.

I will not go on to recount the incidents of the day. Suffice it to say that the bag was made up of three "spotted deer" (*Axis maculata*), one "red deer,"

or jungle sheep, one porcupine, sundry hares, and a diminutive pig, which last, greatly to his delight, fell to our host's "breech-loading rifle."

When we had finished we dismissed our host* and made for our camp. I had omitted to say that our good friend the Government Agent at Negombo, had kindly sent his travelling bullock-cart out for our use. It was a most comfortable affair, with a painted roof and long enough to sleep in. Before going our host gave us a key, which he said belonged to a drawer underneath it, which we should find most useful as it was practically waterproof. In this we stowed our ammunition.

Our battery for this trip, where the bag was most likely to consist of deer, consisted of two .450 Express rifles, and our 12-bore guns, which were both cylinders and capable of taking a bullet with five drachms of powder.

Next day, according to our orders, a start was made before daylight. We simply spread our mattresses in the travelling cart and slept quietly on.

The sun had been up some time when we came to a river, which in the rains was no doubt a formidable affair. At present it showed a good deal of sand-bank, and our driver, who knew the way, bumped us confidently down the bank. I had resumed my recumbent position, but Will was sitting in his pyjamas at the front of the cart. Without my

* In the East it is always the etiquette for Europeans to *dismiss* natives of however exalted rank at the end of an interview. In fact no native thinks of leaving till told he may do so.

noticing it he reached for a rifle. They were hanging in slings at the sides of the cart. The driver's protest, "Dorai, dorai" (sir, sir), roused me, and I turned round just in time to see Will aiming at one of a couple of alligators, who were basking on a sand-bank.

Bang! went the rifle, and in spite of the driver's best endeavours, the bullocks bolted into deep water. In less than a minute the smart cart was upset, and Will, I, driver, bullocks, and for all I knew the alligators too, were all struggling for the opposite shore. The incident ended better than might be expected, for the cart being closed in behind like a London tradesman's cart, nothing was lost except Will's socks, which served him right. Although everything was sopping wet, the weather and water were both warm, and we were soon at work drying and cleaning ourselves and our property on the opposite bank. Fortunately most of our things and all our stores were in the country cart, which was following, and the ammunition being in the tight-fitting drawer, had escaped. I always have rifle cartridges soldered up in tin cases holding ten; but to have had our gun cartridges wetted would have been a serious loss.

Will was so penitent I couldn't abuse him as he deserved for his recklessness, which after all had had no serious consequences; but as it was obvious there would be a long delay here, we decided to camp till after dinner. I may add that the bullocks never forgot the incident, and refused absolutely to allow

a European to get into the cart, so that we had to make a swap with those in the other vehicle. After we had had some breakfast we started off up this river with our guns, and shot some teal, snipe, and hares.

Dinner being over, our beds were laid in the cart, and the bullocks moved off at their usual pace (about two miles an hour), while we smoked till we were sleepy and then dropped off. We awoke to find daylight breaking over the camp, which was pitched among some fairly open ground, broken with clumps of jungle. We took our rifles and moved off in opposite directions. I was out some hours, but only saw three does just as I was giving it up. Meat was wanted in camp, so after a fairly easy stalk I shot one, and, marking the place, returned to camp to send for it. Will was in before me, having seen no quadrupeds, and only bagged a young peacock. This was a welcome addition to our table, but the Express bullet had made rather a mess of it. Peafowl have a habit of sitting sunning themselves on stumps and dead trees in the early morning, and often afford pretty shots for the rifle, but a rook rifle should be used. This is almost the only way one can get a shot at them in Ceylon, where they are very shy. In India, of course, being sacred, they are tame enough. I have often thought when, in beating hill-sides there for big game, the peafowl came sailing over my head, what glorious "rocketers" they would make if they would only fly a bit higher. From consideration for the feelings of the natives, and also

because they are so tame, they are rarely molested in India, except by Tommy Atkins, who cannot be deterred from shooting them either by stringent orders, or by the prospect of a free fight with a whole village should he be detected.

After breakfast we had another turn, with the guns this time, and bagged some quail and jungle fowl. It is a pity that the latter bird is so desperate a runner, for when he does get on the wing he resembles a cock pheasant a good deal. Of course when in hand the resemblance ceases, the bird being in appearance something between a game fowl and a golden pheasant, but with the colouring of the former.

Before we started that night a native for whom Will had sent turned up. Though he had by no means the ability of the east coast trackers, Jim Crow (a perversion of his native name) had often acted as tracker to those Englishmen who had tried their luck on the less well-stocked country about Chilaw, and it was to act in this capacity that we had sent for him. He informed us that there was a fair amount of game at a place two days off to the north-east, and we told him to instruct the drivers accordingly.

The next camp was not any good for big game, but we got some waterfowl. In the evening, Jim Crow said if we liked to put off our start a few hours there was a water-hole where the bears often came to drink, near the camp. Will absolutely declined to sacrifice his slumbers, but I, who was younger and keener, said I would go. Jim Crow accordingly went

off to arrange a stand for us, and after dinner I accompanied him thither.

To sit up for possible game in the tropics one must be very keen, for the discomfort is very great. The stand only consisted of a couple of poles to sit on, the mosquitoes, whose numbers were easily accounted for by the presence of water, were maddening, and, of course, I couldn't smoke. After straining my eyes for about an hour (for there was no moon), I noticed the tracker was fast asleep and threatening to drop off his perch, he was nodding so violently. I gave him a shake and roused him, although I could hardly help feeling it was a pity he should not drop into the pool and thus obtain the bath, of which, if I could rely on my olfactory organs, he stood so greatly in need.

Shortly afterwards I heard a stick snap to my right, and all my senses were on the alert at once. I hastily retouched my sights with a little piece of phosphorus I carried on purpose, and listened intently. It was evident from the sound that one or more heavy animals were coming down to drink. At last I felt sure I saw something moving in the deep shade of some wild mango-trees. I half raised my rifle, leaning forward to try and distinguish a head or a tail, or anything which could guide me as to where to aim and also what the animals really were.

Just at that moment a sonorous snore from my left broke the silence. Crash! went the buffaloes, for such they proved to be, through the jungle, and my chance was gone. A sound cuff aroused Master Jim

Crow from his slumbers to hear such language as I trust I have not often been guilty of. I can certainly plead extreme provocation, but for five minutes or so the recording angel must have been pretty busy with my page. At length I felt I had verbally and manually done my utmost to rouse Mr. Jim Crow to a sense of his sin, and not feeling inclined to persevere after such a crushing blow, I descended the tree. After lighting our lantern I examined the spoor. Buffaloes they certainly were, and apparently one was a bull, for the hoofs were a good deal bigger than the others. I lit a cheroot and made for the carts, which were soon under way for our next camp.

I did not feel inclined to go out next morning, so Will went alone and shot a buck axis. He told me he had seen a good lot of bear spoor, and Jim Crow swore he knew "berry good tank," so I agreed to go again.

I had been waiting over the "berry good tank," which turned out to be a small, dirty-looking pond, about an hour and a half. I need hardly say that this time I had not failed to keep a sharp eye on Jim, pushing him whenever I noticed he remained long in one position. All at once, without a sound to warn me, two bears appeared coming straight down to the pool. When they got there I aimed at one and fired. Before I could note the effect of the shot, he reared up and attacked his companion, growling fiercely. The other, who was nothing loth for a fight (when is a Ceylon bear?—the most cantankerous and evil-dispositioned little wretch on the face of the earth), at once

grappled with him, and they waltzed round and round biting and clawing savagely. Meanwhile, I afforded them an accompaniment to their dance by emptying my rifle three times into the pair. At last one dropped dead, and the other after sniffing at him moved slowly off, I firing my last two cartridges at him as he went. We descended the tree, and I sent Jim Crow off for the carts. When these arrived, I got some fresh cartridges, and accompanied by Will in pyjamas and slippers, and by Jim Crow with a lantern, we proceeded to look for bear number two. I need hardly say we proceeded cautiously, for a Ceylon bear in the daytime and unprovoked is a dangerous beast, so what would he be wounded and in the dark? However, our caution was unnecessary, for a score of yards away we found him also dead. Having seen him put in the baggage cart we turned in and soon dropped off, to the accompaniment of creaking axles, and the "Dah! dah!"* of the drivers.

I may here add that when we came to examine the bears next day, we found one bear had been hit by two bullets and one by three. This gives an average of 50 per cent. of hits at about seventy yards. I should call this a good average in the dark, and this explains (with the discomfort) why this night work is so unpopular with sportsmen. Sitting up means certain discomfort, possibly no game seen, and very fluke shooting if it is dark, whereas if there is a moon it is almost worse.

* The Ceylon bullock drivers' equivalent for "Come hup."

I was waked next morning by hearing an English voice asking my boy* whose camp this was. I jumped out of the travelling cart, and to my surprise, I saw an Englishman on horseback. We soon fraternised, for introductions are not essential in the jungle, seventy miles from anywhere. I found Will had gone off shooting at daylight.

As soon as the stranger mentioned his name, which was F——, I knew who he was. He was one of the most celebrated elephant shots in the island, one of the two who had been put in charge of the Prince of Wales during his tour. I asked him what he was doing there, and he explained that he was Revenue Officer at an out-of-the-way station called Vivoniavivankulam, and that, finding the time rather heavy on his hand, he had got a few days' leave and ridden nearly across the island to look for a notorious rogue elephant hereabouts, who had killed so many men and done so much mischief that the Government had increased the usual reward upon his head to £10.

"Perhaps you'll come too and have a shy at him," he remarked casually. I need hardly say I was wild with delight at the thought. I had never had a chance to shoot an elephant in those days, and now to be offered one at a notorious rogue, and in company which I considered made his death a certainty! The idea took away my breath.

Meanwhile, it turned out F—— had missed his camp, and none of my people knew it by name. I

* Servant. All Ceylon servants are boys, even if gray-headed.

suggested he should stop to breakfast, when Jim Crow would probably be able to show him the way. He gladly accepted. About eleven Will returned with a red deer, and heartily greeted F——, who was an old friend. Jim Crow said the camp was about five miles off, so he was sent to tell F——'s people to move it up to us. About sunset they arrived, and F——'s tracker came to make his report. He was a little wizened-up creature, but absolutely fearless, and had aided F—— to kill scores of elephants. Like those of most natives of the north, his head and face were terribly scarred by bears.

He reported the elephant to be using a jungle not more than three miles from our camp, so it was quite a chance Will had not come on him that morning. He also added that it was a very "perilly hora" (dangerous rogue). In spite of all his care the brute had caught his wind, and had at once charged down upon him, and he had had some difficulty in slipping away among the tree-trunks.

We spent the time before dinner in loading some cartridges with five drachms of powder and a Macleod bullet, a projectile which was then fashionable but seems now to have entirely gone out of use. They were cylindrical projectiles pierced from end to end with holes which were twisted in somewhat the same way as the rifling of a military rocket. The idea was that the air passing through the holes would give a rotatory movement to the projectile, which was about twice the weight of a ball of the same calibre. I cannot say I ever obtained any very satisfactory

results with them at game, but I never gave them a fair chance. I once saw a trial of them at a hundred yards, the target being a mark on a brick wall, and they then appeared to combine accuracy and smashing power. This was the only day I ever used them at big game. They were, of course, only meant for use in smooth-bores.

Next morning we started early. F——, of course, had his elephant rifle, as far as I remember an 8-bore. In less than an hour we were on the fresh tracks of the brute. He was evidently moving on rather rapidly. F——'s tracker followed the trail almost at a trot, and it was rather hot work keeping him in sight.

At length it was obvious we were close to the elephant, but still he kept on heading more and more into the thickest jungle. We heard no sound.

"Nasty dangerous brute," whispered F——; "we shall hear him before we see him, I bet."

A minute or two after the tracker stopped and pointed to a branch which was still oscillating violently. He could not be a minute before us. We all stopped and looked intently among the thick trees.

With a scream of rage the rogue crashed out at us. We all fired, I think. The tracker ran towards Will, the elephant in close pursuit. Will fired again and turned to run. The tracker had slipped out of the way. F—— and I both fired as the elephant passed between us, but for once his hand had lost its cunning. Reloading as we went, we ran after

the elephant, which was gaining rapidly on our poor friend.

“Round a tree,” shouted F——, “run round a tree.” The advice was none too soon, and Will evidently heard, or had the same idea, for he turned towards the nearest tree, the elephant not two lengths behind him, and we, distanced in spite of our best endeavours, were still forty yards behind.

To our horror we saw him catch his foot in something and down he went full length. I heard F—— groan with despair, and dropping on my knee, fired two barrels uselessly into the brute’s hind-quarters.

Whether the blood from half-a-dozen wounds had blinded him, or Will’s sudden disappearance into the long grass had deceived him, I cannot say, but, half-stopping, the elephant turned to the right and made off into the jungle. F——, who had run on after I fired, gave him two more barrels in the hope of bringing him into action once more, but he had lost heart, and though we followed him for hours we never got a sight of him again. This was certainly one of the most miraculous escapes ever known in elephant-shooting. That a rogue elephant should pause at all in his charge, unless hit in the head, is unheard of; and that any elephant should abandon the object of pursuit when actually on the ground, is equally so.

I may as well recount the end of the elephant. A fortnight after he was found dead in the jungle. The Government reward was claimed by, and paid to, no less a person than our friend Jim Crow. Fortu-

nately for him none of us heard of it till a good year afterwards.

That night was F——'s last, and he left us at daybreak.

Our supply of rice was running short, for though we had cut our staff as low as possible, we had eight persons to feed besides ourselves. So we reluctantly gave orders to prepare for a start coastwards after dinner that night.

We were in luck that morning, and each shot a buck axis. As we were returning to camp, Jim Crow caught my arm and pointed to a bush about forty yards off. The bush was shaking violently, and a patch of shaggy black hair was visible. It was Will's shot. Without waiting to see more clearly he fired. The bear at once dropped from the tree, and with no more ado charged straight at us, growling fiercely. Will fired again, and the bear turned off into the jungle. Fortunately there was time for me to fire, and he dropped to the shot, got up and charged again, when Will killed him.

The Ceylon bear is the most savage little wretch on the face of the earth, and, as I have said, in the north of the island, where they are most common, many of the natives are marked by their teeth and claws, these wounds being generally inflicted in entirely unprovoked attacks. Even in captivity they are savage. A friend of mine had one which he called "John the Baptist." Although he had been taken from his dead mother when not a foot long, it was dangerous for any one to approach within reach of

the chain which was fastened to a strap round his waist. I recollect an amusing incident about this bear. The Archdeacon, when on a journey, happened to put up at my friend's house, and was duly introduced to the bear.

"But why," asked the man of both worlds, "do you call him John the Baptist?"

"Because he wears a leathern girdle round his loins and is very fond of honey." The Archdeacon laughed heartily.

To return, however, to our trip. We travelled again that night, towards the coast this time. In the morning we went out with our rifles. In a piece of fairly open ground we saw a herd of axis. We began our stalk, but to our disgust, just as we were getting near them, they bounded to their feet and made off. I was greatly puzzled to account for this, as they had not looked our way and could not have got our wind.

The mystery, however, was soon explained. From behind the slope which had hidden him walked a fine leopard, looking after the retreating deer. He was about a hundred and twenty yards off. It was Will's shot.

"Better take the shot," I said. "He's standing quite still now, and if we try to stalk him he is just as likely to move off after the deer."

Will lay down and took a steady shot. The leopard disappeared. We walked across, and found him lying dead, shot through the heart.

Three days after we were at Chilaw. We had to

stop there some days waiting for the steamer, but managed to kill time snipe and teal-shooting, and looking after our trophies. Our total bag was as follows: fourteen spotted deer, two red deer (jungle sheep), three bears, one porcupine, one leopard, one pig (a very large boar I shot when sitting up one night by mistake for a bear) — total, twenty head of big game. Besides this we had killed three peafowl, some jungle fowl, and quail, and a number of teal and snipe.

Times are changed since then, and I doubt if a couple of sportsmen would be able to kill two head of big game over the same ground in the same time.

CHAPTER IX.

WITH THE KILLING KILDARES.

IF Meath—Royal Meath—be the premier hunting county of Ireland, Kildare runs her pretty close, so close that I doubt if the Kildare men allow the pre-eminence of their neighbour.

Now it so happens that of Meath I can only say *vidi tantum*, for only five times in my life have I hunted there, and of those few days one was with the "Wards" and another with harriers. The latter (the pack has long ceased to exist) showed me the best fun I ever saw in the county. Meeting at Fleenstown, they ran in that very good country for seventy minutes, and straight, thanks to luckily changing hares several times—to the grief and sorrow of the Master (his own huntsman), who, having "taken a toss," arrived only in time to see one of the field holloa his little beauties—for the fifth or sixth time had he known it—on to a fresh hare.

On this occasion, moreover, I jumped (by mistake) what I believe must have been quite the biggest place I ever negotiated. For, putting my mare at a fair ditch, to me, and up-bank with a wattled fence on top, I became aware, when too late, of a yawning gulf

beyond—not uncommon in Meath—and beyond that again a large heap of fresh metal which projected some way into a nasty greasy road. Fortunately, the roan mare was Pembrokehire born and bred, and that sort always have a leg to spare, and very often *two*. So with a kick back and an extra effort, apparently in the air, we landed safely with a slither in the road, I am afraid to say how many feet from the top of the big bank.

The week before I had seen the Kildares for the first time, but the sport had been tame, and it was not till a fortnight later that I saw a really good thing with this pack.

A bitter cold day saw us at Saggart Village, the advertised meet. In those days, however, the Land League was a power in the land, and a whisper passed round that the hounds would not come there, but might be heard of towards Johnstown Kennedy. Thitherwards we trotted, only to meet a sight I have never seen elsewhere—a complete pack of foxhounds all muzzled. Recent losses from poison had, however, been serious.

Turning into a chance field the muzzles were removed and thrust into a sack, which was sent home by a groom. Was it on this day that the covert was surrounded by a yelling mob, in spite of which the hounds got away with their fox, being pelted and beaten with rails as they did so? I forget; but at any rate it was in Kildare that December that I witnessed that sight. This day the gorse, Coolmines by name, held a fox, and the said “vulp” ran down

that hill and up Tallaght, sadly blowing our horses. Fortunately they had checked, and we had a little law before they fresh found him in a furzy ditch.

This time he set his mask for the fair city herself, which lay spread out below us like a map, and reaching the plain near Johnville, led us over big fields and bigger fences to ground at Newlands, near Clondalkin. Is that five miles from the Mansion House? Not more, I fancy; but a few years later they ran to the cemetery by Rathmines, which bears to Dublin the relative position of Wormwood Scrubbs to London.

How memory makes the pen run on! I had not meant to describe this day at all, but this run it was that made me vow I would have a season with the Kildares yet, which vow I was enabled to keep some few years later.

When I returned to Kildare, Goodall still carried the horn, and Major St. Leger Moore, who had safely steered his way through the Land League troubles, still held the reins of Mastership.

If Meath is a country where blood and "scope" are as necessary as in Leicestershire, Kildare is assuredly the one of all others where a clever horse is necessary. In fact the cleverest of them tumble about in Kildare. Nothing strikes the Saxon so much as the number of falls he sees when hunting in Ireland. To be sure, nine times out of ten a fall over a bank is nothing, whereas an "imperial crowner" over timber is very often something to remember for life.

In England we are used to seeing a certain class of sportsmen—no longer young and not too desperate thrusters—who can afford to pay a round figure for a safe conveyance, hunt day after day, and perhaps not have a fall in the season. Nothing struck me more in Ireland than the sight of such Nimrods often with dirty backs. The explanation was simple; it always began: "It wasn't the horse's fault, but——" there was a binder on the bank, or the bank broke, or no matter what. The fact remains that there are more falls on the other side of the Channel, and that not only among the young, active, and not too wealthy, but also among their seniors, who fall less lightly and can afford to pay for safety.

Now what was the best run I ever saw in Kildare? As a real fast spin ending with blood, nothing, I think, that I saw can touch a gallop we had from Gingers-town Gorse one day just before the opening of the legitimate season, when they raced from that gorse for five-and-thirty minutes and killed in the laurels at Landestown House. That day is impressed on my memory by the recollection of the fact that a horse of mine had the last of that run absolutely to himself, although (worse luck!) he was not carrying me. Nor was I there to see his prowess, having fallen a victim to that old Kildare trap, a little bank and a big ditch beyond. Although by a violent effort the mare cleared it, she overjumped herself and rolled head over heels with me into the field beyond. My left stirrup hung me up, but a Good Samaritan came to the rescue ere more harm was

done than a black eye from a blow with the side of a hoof. I shall always think of him with gratitude, but why—oh, why—did he slip the girths instead of pulling the stirrup leather out of the bar? Once I was on my feet the others, of course, rode on, and it took me minutes to girth up the impatient little beast. So that at all events was not the best run I saw in Kildare.

Then there was a day of another sort, when a fox from Copeland's Gorse gave us a hunting run of no less than an hour and three-quarters, beating us handsomely at last among the mountains on the Wicklow side of the country. To make open confession, I was funkng sadly that day, and cannot claim to have been "in it." I may urge the extenuating circumstance that I was riding the same mare who had given me the above-mentioned fall, and who, though a wonderful timber-jumper, was just a little rash for Kildare.

"A more sthragglin' hunt Oi nivir saw in me loife," criticised a stalwart son of the soil whom we passed after running over an hour, and I fear I was among the "sthragglers" that day.

"A run," said Mr. Jorrocks,* (and who can write of fox-hunting without quoting him?) "a run is either a *buster*—elbows and legs throughout—or it's sharp at first and slow arterwards—or it is slow at first and sharp arterwards." I have just glanced at one of the former class and at one of the second. I think, however, that the best run I saw with the Kildares was

* "Handley Cross." Chap. xxxiii., p. 265, Original Edition.

of the third class, which Mr. Jorrocks goes on to say, "is hawkward for the fox. The thing improves, just like an hicc-cream in the eatin'."

After running a fox to ground in the morning we went off to draw a well-known gorse, by name Mat Conran's. Here there were a brace of foxes, and hounds got away with one. I cannot say that our run was ever slow, but the first part of it was woodland, for our fox made at once for Ballymore Wood. Hence they ran through the Grange Con Woods, practically one with Ballymore, being only separated from it by a little brook, and away by Ballyhook, Rathallagh, and Cross Keys to Dunlavin Town.

What his point was I know not, but here he was headed from it and turned to the right. Hounds were running very fast now, and fences were big and plentiful. The banks *are* big, too, in the Dunlavin country.

His new point was towards Tynte Park, but again he turned from it to the left by Tober and Lemons-town, making, perhaps, for the Baron de Robeck's covert of Cryhelp. He had to cry "help," however, or as Mr. Jorrocks would say, "capevi," before he got there; for, as he crossed a by-road, hounds pulled him down in the gateway of a little farm, the name of which none of us knew, and which did not appear in the Ordnance map. The time was just sixty-three minutes; the distance—well, the local papers called it a ten-mile point, but that it was *not*. Nevertheless, it had been a fast hunting run, and at times more than that.

Riding as I was a Kildare horse, born and broken, who then had never given me a fall, I never enjoyed a run better.

Would I could hope to see Kildare's green pastures again !

CHAPTER X.

MY FIRST "TWELFTH." HOW I MISSED IT AND YET
LOST NOTHING THEREBY.

I HAD been a year in England on sick-leave, and my health being completely restored, was beginning to think once more of the wild sports of the East, when one July morning I received a letter from my friend Jack M——, asking me to join him on his paternal moors for the ensuing "Twelfth."

Though I had from boyhood been familiar with every form of English sport, it so happened that I had at that time never had an opportunity of shooting grouse, and *the sport par excellence* of Scotland remained unknown to me till long after I had reached manhood, and become familiar with the big game of Asia and Africa.

I need hardly say I accepted the invitation, only too pleased at the chance of participating in a sport which had so long been the object of my desires. The moors in question were situated in the old province of Galloway, and as I have always preferred a sea voyage to a long and tedious railway journey, I decided to take ship from Bristol. The "Twelfth" falling on a Monday that year, I was invited to be at my host's on the 10th. I found there was a Clyde

Company's steamer advertised in "Bradshaw" to sail on the 9th and reach Belfast on the Saturday morning. Thence I could take the mail steamer to Stranraer. But

"Of men and mice best schemes oft gang agley."

I had reckoned without the fact that I was sailing on a Friday. Our cargo not being all in we lost a tide—no uncommon occurrence with these coasting craft. Still, the skipper assured me I should be able to catch the mail train at Belfast. He reckoned, however, without the weather, for no sooner were we fairly in the Bristol Channel than we ran into a regular gale. All night it raged, and a dirtier night I have rarely seen. At last we ran into smoother water in the lee of the Wicklow Hills. Before we had crossed Dublin Bay, however, it was pretty obvious all chance of my catching a train which left Belfast in the afternoon was gone, and with it, I feared, my chance of the opening day of the grouse-shooting. I couldn't blame the steamer, for the gale had been terrific. In fact, it was alluded to in the papers as "the gale of the 10th of August," and the Channel Squadron, lying at Queenstown, had been forced to put to sea. But I thought regretfully of that lost tide.

We had a pleasant enough run up the Irish Coast, but it was midnight when we got into Belfast. I slept on board the steamer, and on Sunday morning I took the train to Larne. I had ascertained, if I could only get across, I could get a train from Port-

patrick which would enable me to shoot on the Monday. So leaving my luggage at the station I made for the shore, casting envious eyes at a fine yacht lying at anchor in the Lough.

I accosted a knot of fishermen loafing on the beach, and asked them what they would take to put me across to Portpatrick.

“Na, na, my lad,” said the eldest, as spokesman for the rest, “we canna do sic a thing on the Sawbath. *Besides, it’s too rough.*”

Thought I to myself, if it wasn’t for your second reason, I could soon show you a golden argument against your first. But these Scoto-Irish fishermen are daring enough, and if they say it is too rough, it may be taken for certain that putting out would mean risking life. So grumbling at my luck I returned to the hotel, forced to kill the day by making violent love to a very plain barmaid, and drinking an inordinate quantity of Campbelltown whisky with a couple of jovial Patlanders, who turned up to dinner. Finally I turned into what I rightly thought was a very damp bed.

The result of this Hibernian Night’s Entertainment was that I woke up with a general feeling of seediness, resulting in an incipient cold and a bad headache. However, a roughish passage cured the latter, and balsam of aniseed the former, and I felt no ill effects from my experience.

At last I was in Scotland for the first time for seventeen years. But now I was confronted with another difficulty. The boat train from Stranraer to

Euston is a mail train, only stopping at very few stations. It had been arranged by my hosts that it should stop at P——, their railway station, on the Saturday night. But this was Monday. However, I went to the Stranraer stationmaster, who listened to my story, and very courteously promised to stop the train at P——. At last my troubles were over, and when I jumped out of the train, there was my friend Jack on the platform, in evening dress, for it was late.

"Well, what have you done?" I cried.

"Oh," he replied, "it was so beastly wet we didn't shoot."

All's well that ends well, thought I. We jumped into the brougham, and were soon whirled up to the house.

The 13th of August, 18—, was not by any means a perfect day, but it was an improvement on the Twelfth. The P—— moors, like most Lowland shootings, were more noted for partridge than grouse-shooting, and consequently the party was always smaller at this time than the first week in September. It consisted, as far as shooting men were concerned, of my friend Jack, his father, myself, and an odd sort of Devonshire parson, whose name I forget, but who was an unbounded source of delight to us. It was obviously his great object in life to be considered a mighty Nimrod, and never shall I forget the contemptuous off-hand way in which he answered my query if he knew Jack Russell. He, however, did not arrive till a day after myself.

Next morning, as I have said, was not an ideal

shooting morning. The wind was high, and there were occasional showers. A gun-room conference was held, and our host not being keen on going out himself, it was decided we two should work some outlying beats, leaving the best ground for a finer day. The dogs at P—— were all pretty bad, so Jack said, but we took two and started.

The dogs certainly were pretty bad, but not long after we had started, one of them made a pretty steady point. I went towards him, out flew a bird, and up went my gun. The keeper's warning cry was too late to stop me, but it put me off, and the gray hen, for such it was, flew off unscathed, amid my friend's laughter. Soon afterwards we got among the right article, and I bagged my first grouse. This, of course, was not much of a day, but the whole thing, moors and all, being new to me, I enjoyed it considerably. When we returned to the house, we found that the parson had arrived, and that our party was made up.

The next day was fine and warm, the dogs were, by our host's orders, left at home, and everything promised for a good day's sport. We tossed for beats, and Jack and I fell together. We were both shooting well, and the bag mounted up rapidly, so much so that by lunch we had left the other two far behind. This was no wonder, as one of them was an elderly gentleman disinclined to exertion, and as for the other, as the head keeper observed to Jack, "Gin nae mair gude cam' o' his preachin' than o' his shootin' he wad na convairt mony sinners."

We worked on steadily again after lunch, which,

by the way, was interrupted by a diverting incident. The ladies had joined us, and we were all seated on the banks of a little mountain loch, on which numbers of small water-birds (dabchicks, I believe) were floating. Emboldened by our remaining quiet some of them approached quite near to us, when Jack whispered to me he'd have a rise out of the parson.

"It's wonderful," he began, "how deceptive the distances are on these lochs. How far, now, would you think that bird is off?"

"About thirty-five, say forty yards," said the parson, scanning the object carefully.

"More like three times that," said Jack quietly.

"Nonsense, I can see its eye, quite plainly."

So could I.

"Well, you say it's within gun-shot, don't you?" queried the tormentor. "You try, and you'll find it isn't."

Now I began to see the drift of his remarks. It is almost impossible to shoot these little birds, as they dive at the flash of the gun.

"I'm sure it is."

"Try, then; if you weren't a parson, I'd bet you wouldn't hit it."

At last the parson jumped up, and seizing his gun, went to the shore of the loch.

Bang! The aim was true enough, and the shot struck all round the spot where the bird had been.

"You see," said the Devonian.

"It isn't hit," said Jack quietly. "You frightened it, I admit, and it dived. It'll be up directly."

True enough, he had hardly finished speaking when the bird came up with the ridiculous bob peculiar to diving water-fowl.

"Well, it must be further than I thought," admitted the astonished cleric; "but I'm sure it isn't as far as you say. My left barrel is full choke, and that will reach it."

So saying, he fired again with exactly the same result. Again and again he fired, aiming a long way over the bird. We could see the shot strike many feet beyond now, and were in fits of suppressed laughter. At last the parson gave it up, but I don't suppose he knows to this day why he didn't hit that dabchick.

We now betook ourselves again to the serious business of the day, still remaining "on the spot." Consequently few broods got up without paying toll to the extent of three or four birds. As we passed a small pool on the moor a duck got up, flying back. I was shooting with a 20-bore, so although it was a long shot I took it. The first barrel only feathered her, but she dropped dead to the second. The keeper paced it, eighty yards to where she dropped, but I don't think she fell quite straight.

"Aweel," he said, "I wad hae bet a thoosan' pounds agin that shot."

I wondered who would have taken him.

"Jack," I said presently, "I am lucky to-day. I don't believe I have put up my gun without killing with one or other barrel."

I was going down a marshy bit by a dyke as I

spoke. Presently up got a snipe, and down it went. I couldn't find it anywhere though, and Jack began to laugh. The keeper slipped his retriever, but with no result.

"Bother the snipe! I thought I was on it."

I was just turning away, when I saw it, wedged between two stones of the dyke some four feet off the ground. No wonder the dog couldn't find it. The laugh was now on my side.

At last it was time to go home. We were descending a brae, when four grouse got up wild, and alighted on the far side of a narrow gorge down which a brook ran. One of them looked very large to me, and I suggested we should drive them. Accordingly, the keeper made a *détour* for the purpose while we crept into cover. I made for a gorse-bush on the near edge of the valley. It could not have been fifty yards across, for I could distinctly see the grouse-cock, and I fancied his bright red eye was fixed on me. The keeper coming suddenly on him, I suppose, put me out of his mind, for he flew straight towards me. I stood up, and he tried to rise out of danger. Vain hope, and in a minute he was whirling down close by me. He was, indeed, a lovely bird, in perfect plumage, and the heaviest grouse I ever saw shot—I forget the exact weight. The hens had turned off, and Jack shot two. These were the last grouse of the day.

Just before we left the moor the retriever, now running loose, put up a rabbit, which darted across the path at great speed. I was in front and had

a snap-shot at him. The smoke hung in the evening air. When it cleared the rabbit was gone.

“Spoilt the average now,” laughed Jack. But when we got to the spot there was the rabbit, whose speed had rolled him across the path and into the heather the other side. So again the laugh was on my side.

This, roughly speaking, was our contribution to the bag—forty odd brace of grouse, half-a-dozen hares, three or four rabbits, a duck, a snipe, and a hawk. I remember the three last items, as they happened to fall to my gun. What the total bag was I forget, but we two guns were satisfied.

Next day our host declined to face the hill, so we were reduced to a party of three. I was shooting badly, and there were not many birds, so I should have had a dull day had it not been for the amusement the Devonian rector afforded. In the first place, as a sportsman of the old school, he pleaded for dogs, and Jack ordered out a couple—a pointer and setter. We had to submit to a good deal of the theory of grouse-shooting on our drive to the moor. At last we made a start, the dogs ranging wildly. Presently one came to a point, and as the other wasn't near him his not backing didn't matter. The parson went to him. Out fluttered a bird, and down it went—nearly blown to pieces—an old gray hen. The head keeper's face was a study, for the parson had missed several gray hens the day before, and been duly cautioned.

Not long after there was another point near the

parson. Again a single bird got up, and again it went down. This time it was a cock partridge.

"Well, I'm d——d if I ever saw the like of that," swore the head keeper roundly.

Jack and I nearly died with laughter.

But the best was to come. Later in the day the parson shot at a hare, and hit it, but obviously "very far back." In fact, it only had a hind leg broken. Off went the hare, and off in pursuit went the parson. I shall never forget the long black figure running across the moor, every now and then, as one of us said, "luffing up and firing a gun." This was too much for the unsteady dogs, who joined in loud-mouthed pursuit, coursing the three-legged hare all over the moor. Not less loud-mouthed was the keeper, but whistling and cursing was no use. Jack and I lay down on the heather, almost crying with laughter. At last the dogs were secured and well thrashed, and the parson returned, hot and empty-handed. I think he was ashamed of his performance, for he muttered something about not liking to leave poor animals in pain, while we tried vainly to resume our gravity.

I need hardly say our bag that day was a good bit inferior to that of the preceding day. But Jack and I had several more good days before I left, and I should be sorry to think that we shall not have some more there yet.

CHAPTER XI.

SPORT IN AN INDIAN FOREST RESERVE.

IN my rambles in the hills, some seven or eight miles round my station, I came upon an antique gateway of Hindoo architecture forming the centre of a battlemented wall. I pushed my Arab up the much-broken paved roadway which led to it. The gates which had closed it were long since gone, and the walls were broken and undermined in a dozen places by the numerous trees, now in all their greenness under the influence of the summer rains. On the gateway itself, and the wall adjoining, half-a-score of pea-fowl were sunning themselves. On my left as I entered was a peaked rock, which was connected at each side with the masonry enceinte. As I proceeded through the grove, which pointed to the existence of water higher up the valley, I became aware that the place I had entered must in other days have been a fortress of great strength. The gorge was, or rather had been, completely closed by the wall through which I had entered, and the steep hills each side were also crowned with masonry. Presently a bend in the road revealed one of those Indian views which are so effective in the distance, and so disappointing when approached

near. On a lower hill was perched the graceful form of an old castle, with the native village nestling at its foot. Behind, the hills ran back, forming a ruddy background in the setting sun. Between me and the village lay a large tank with a *bund* of antique masonry, which was crowned with a line of lofty trees. The *bund* itself formed a large garden, evidently badly kept, and at one end stood a bungalow of some kind.

The setting sun warned me that I must be going, so as to get on to the high-road before dark. I rode off, promising myself another visit to the valley before long.

Next day I made some inquiries as to the place I had seen. I learnt firstly what was indeed obvious, that the place had been in old days a strong fortress, and the seat of a petty Rajpoot chief. The family had, however, fallen on evil times since the days of British rule had commenced. The ruin which the inability to levy tribute (and no doubt to plunder) had commenced, the *bunnias** had completed. The old family were gone. Who inhabited the castle I know not, for I never went there, knowing by experience that it is better to see these native places from a distance. I was further told that the old bungalow I had seen had been erected years ago as a sort of club by the officers of the garrison. They had taken it in turns to go there for a change, and the then

* *Bunnias*—the hereditary grain-dealing caste, who combine with their ancestral occupation the more profitable one of usury.

well-kept gardens had supplied them with vegetables. The thing had come to an end, probably as increased travelling facilities enabled the subscribers to go to the hills when they wanted a change, and the place had fallen into the hands of a *bunnia*, who cannot find it a very profitable property, I should imagine. The great thing which I learnt was that the bungalow—only the bare walls, of course—was available for the use of any one who cared to use it. I promised myself a few days' holiday there, provided there should prove to be any chance of sport, which I had sent my *shikari* out to ascertain.

On his return he made a favourable report. The reverse slope of the hills forming the valley I have mentioned was, he said, forest reserve, and contained plenty of blue bull, and there were panthers, one having killed a calf only that week.

I think I should here explain what a "forest reserve" is. To prevent the reckless destruction by the natives of all the timber, Government has marked out all through India enormous tracts as forest reserve. No wood-cutting is allowed in these, and they are walled round to prevent cattle entering them. In the wooded districts of Central India they form real forests of *sâl* and teak, and are watched with jealous care, no shooting even being allowed in them except during the rains for fear of forest fires. In Rajputana they vary according to the district. In the reserves I am speaking of it would be difficult to find a timber tree, the growth, as a rule, being low jungle with thorn bushes. Nobody can doubt, how-

ever, that they will in time form real forests and be very beneficial to the country. All over India these reserves form natural strongholds for the game, who are not only safe there from native guns, but even from disturbance by cattle and their guardians. I have even seen it stated in Indian papers that these reserves account for the large increase of tigers in some districts, and I think that this is very likely to be the case.

Having, then, obtained a favourable report as to the chances of getting something to shoot, and induced three others of the garrison to promise to accompany me, I proceeded to make the necessary arrangements. In England the idea of furnishing an empty house for a couple of days would strike a householder with horror. In India one contemplates the idea of sending out tables, chairs, beds and bedding, baths, and even cooking utensils with equanimity, the result of residence in a country where every man has his tent, as in England he has his umbrella. It was consequently only necessary to give the order that we were going to such and such a place for so many days and the thing seemed to arrange itself. On the actual day of departure we were, perhaps, a little short of glass and plate, but hardly sufficiently so to show that the furniture for a house had departed early that morning.

As the sun's rays decreased in intensity our horses were brought round and we mounted. At the same time our body servants, carrying those endless parcels that a native servant never will dispense with, started

off in a *tonga*, or Indian dog-cart. We had some greyhounds with us, but our route soon lay among rocky valleys where there was no chance of sport, as, though we found several times, the dogs soon lost sight of their game. Towards sunset we reached the bungalow and found everything ready for our reception. To be sure there were some things to remind us that we were not at home, as, for instance, the relics of a bird's nest on the bar of a decayed punkah. But as it was not very hot that did not matter. When we had doffed our riding things and reappeared in clean white, dinner was ready. The meal over, we sat for a long time in the open air, watching the moon and the stars reflected in the lake-like waters of the tank, and discussing the chances of sport next day. At last we turned in.

Next day we were up betimes, but not very early, as there was no need for hurry. After our tea had been disposed of we mounted and started for the rendezvous. Passing the village and the castle, a couple of hundred yards through the jungle brought us to another old gateway, which completed the circle of the old defences. Going through this we shortly emerged on a plain. Our way, however, led round the outskirts of the hill till we came to another native village, called Nayagaon. Here we found the *shikari* with a couple of forest constables and the beaters, about sixty in number. After a preliminary conference we dismounted and followed the *shikari*, while the beaters took a path up the hillside. The *shikari* posted two of the guns in a broad valley separated from

the plain by only one hill. The other two of us he took towards the main hill. Here he told us he proposed to post one near the base, and the other in a saddle higher up. I elected to remain below, and my subaltern, P—, had to climb the other hundred feet of rock.

Scarcely had he done so when the beaters appeared at the head of the valley. They advanced steadily, and several times I heard the furious shouts which mean "game on foot." Presently P—'s rifle rang out twice. Again this happened. The beaters had nearly got to us, when I heard them yelling, and saw what I took to be a panther going towards P—. Again he fired. Just then some gazelle came galloping down the valley between D— and myself. We both fired, but a running gazelle is a small mark at a hundred yards, and they went on untouched. The beat was over. P— came down from his hill, and told us he had missed two hyænas and killed one, besides seeing another he did not get a shot at.

For the next beat we had to climb to the top of several parallel passes. When I afterwards got to know the ground better, I found out that the *shikari* had arranged the guns badly. Had we been stationed half a mile further on, we could easily have commanded the whole ground, whereas as will be seen, this was not the case. Moreover, in going to our posts, we obviously disturbed the very places we were going to beat. My post was only to be attained by climbing nearly half a mile of a rocky ridge.

When about half-way up it, the beaters on the opposite hill disturbed a nylghau. I could not see any horns, and consequently did not care to fire, but the *shikari* swearing it was a bull, I at last did take a shot as it stood for a minute as if considering where it should go. It was a very long shot, and across a deep gorge, which is never conducive to good shooting, and I missed. The beast at once plunged into the jungle beneath, and we never saw it again. At last I reached the ridge, which was between two almost precipitous valleys. The beat only produced one chikara,* which I killed with the smooth-bore. When the beat was over, I found that some blue bulls had gone up the passes nearest the plain, which were unwatched.

The next beat only produced some pig, which, of course, near a station, are sacred, being reserved for pig-sticking. The others were evidently getting sick of the whole thing, so I reluctantly gave the signal to knock off, and we returned the way we had come. Had we only known it we left the two best beats behind us, and we could have taken them so as to go home that way after a short climb.

Breakfast over, I could find no one who cared to leave the bungalow, so went out by myself. I had a couple of beats in some high jungle on the left of the valley of the castle itself, but saw nothing. I returned rather disgusted, but convinced the want of

* The gazelle, also known as the "ravine deer." This was one of the few times I ever saw one in a ravine.

sport was due to faulty arrangements rather than to want of game.

Next day we returned to the station, coursing as we went.

Scarcely a week had elapsed before I had arranged to beat the same jungle again. Accordingly, on the 10th of August, driving out from the station, I arrived at Nayagaon about nine o'clock. The *shikari* had a score of beaters waiting. We first drove the piece which had formed our first beat on the 3rd, I taking the station which had been P——'s on that day. I hoped to kill some more of the hyænas, concerning which the natives made bitter complaints. I did not, however, think that these complaints were well founded, knowing the cowardly nature of these brutes, and felt sure a panther had been at work. However, neither panther nor hyæna was at home. I now stopped the beat and mounted my Arab, directing the *shikari* to let the men recommence shortly, and beat right through steadily till he saw me again. Emerging on to the plain I rode on, passing all the places we had stood at the week before. At last I came to a place which I thought would do. On my right was the main range, on the left a steep hill with a valley each side, both of which I could fairly cover. This would do, as it was obvious that all game the beaters found must either come to the gun or break out over the plain. I had already learnt that they would not cross the main ridge.

A long time elapsed before I could see or hear

anything of the beaters. Meanwhile it began to rain as it only can in India. In ten minutes the valleys were filled with roaring streams, which rolled the loose stones down in their mad career. It left off, however, as suddenly as it had begun, and I uncovered my rifle again. I ought to have mentioned before that a brother officer had asked me to try a rifle of his—a .500 Express. I had fired a few shots at the target with it and found it fairly reliable, but the day was not over before I regretted not having brought a 12-bore.

At last I saw a dark object appear at the top of the pass before me. I was, of course, invisible, being hidden by a clump of jungle. Slowly it descended the hillside, and finally, as it heard the beaters behind, broke into a trot, keeping along the side of the main hill. It was a blue bull. It passed me at about sixty yards. I fired and hit it, but it went on slowly. Again I fired and it fell, but got up and went on slowly. A third time I fired, anathematising the pop-gun I had in my hand. Again I hit it, and after going a few yards it collapsed.

My attention was now directed to a hyæna which was stealing round the hill to my left. I tried to get a shot, but the cunning brute dodged from bush to bush. Meanwhile I heard shouts behind, and to my disgust saw two natives where the bull had fallen, and the bull himself just disappearing over the hill. I waited till the beat was over, and then went towards the natives, who, it seemed, had gone to look at the bull. By doing this they had moved him,

and he had gone on. I need hardly say a wounded animal should never be disturbed in this way by an unarmed man. They summon up, as it were, a reserve of vital force from somewhere, and go on a mile, whereas if left to themselves for a quarter of an hour or so, they rarely move again.

On this occasion, anyhow, the bull was gone, and the *shikari*, as usual, seemed to have no idea what to do. How I longed for my Cingalese trackers! To make matters worse, a heavy storm came on, which of course would obliterate all tracks of the blood. When the shower was over we resumed our beat in the hope of finding the bull. We entered upon a long tract of low jungle running along the base of the hills. For a long time we saw nothing, till at last I called up my horse to ride back to where I had fired, and where my trap was waiting. Just at the minute, in a deep hollow full of thorn-trees, up jumped a bull. I only got a snap shot with both barrels, but heard one bullet, at least, strike. The bull left the jungle, and, jumping the boundary wall like a hunter, galloped across the plain. I ran down where he had gone and saw blood where he had jumped the wall. Luckily my horse was there, and I jumped on his back. The bull had got a good long start, and was heading for a jungle-covered hill not a mile and a half away. Fortunately I knew the country on this side, so rode as hard as my Arab could lay legs to ground, not after the bull, but towards the hill. My manœuvre was successful. As I neared the hill I saw the bull on my right, and

he saw me. As I expected, he changed his direction, and now made for a lofty range, straight before us, but several miles away.

Bar accidents I had him now. I pulled the game little bay together and gradually gained on the "chase," to use a nautical expression. The going, which had been simply awful at first, improved as we went. In a couple of miles I was within easy range, and felt tempted to get off and fire. But the Arab was new to the work, and, worse still, I had only the cartridges in the rifle. So I determined to stick to him, and in a few minutes more I was alongside. Dropping my reins on to my left arm I raised the rifle and fired. No result at first, but presently the bull pulled up rather suddenly. I held off a bit, thinking I might get a charge, but the poor brute only shook his head threateningly. A gush of blood came from his mouth, his knees tottered, he was down, and in a minute my knife was in his throat.

Imagine my surprise to find this was the same bull after all. Besides two trifling wounds, he had one in the ribs, and another through the head not much below the eyes. Either of these would have been fatal with the 12-bore. As it was he had lived an hour, and then galloped some three miles, without apparent difficulty. This was indeed a scathing commentary on the Express with hollow bullet. I never fired at a nylgau again except with a 12-bore.

I rode back to my people, and ordered them to



get a cart and bring the bull to my house. The trap had turned up and I started to drive home. *En route* it fell dark. Never have I see a blacker night. To make matters worse, the fearfully vivid lightning blinded driver and ponies. Over and over again we found ourselves off the road. The rain came down in bucketsful. We nearly wound up with a serious accident, for the driver drove against one of the side rails of a bridge. But though it broke it did not let the trap fall over. I was shot out and broke my knees. At length we saw the lights of the cantonment, and half an hour later, having revelled in a warm bath, I was sitting down to a somewhat late dinner.

I still thought that this particular jungle owed me something, and about a month later (September 18th) I went out to beat it again.

I had the worst of bad luck all day, seeing plenty of nylghau, but all cows and calves, at which I would not shoot. At last I reached the place I have previously described. Nothing came to the gun, but some two hundred yards up the left-hand valley I saw a huge bull. Apparently he saw or avoided me, for he turned off into a little side valley. When the beaters came to me, I told them to return by the plain outside and beat this little valley to me. Meanwhile I walked to the near end of it, and posted myself behind a thick thorn clump. The valley was something the shape of a \perp , of which I had advanced up one limb while the foot ran towards the plain.

The beaters soon appeared opposite me, and in a very few minutes it was evident that the bull had made tracks. I was just going to move away when frantic shouts of "*Bagh! bagh!*" (Tiger! tiger!) and wild howls arose from the beaters. I could see nothing, and supposing it was only a hyæna, or perhaps even a jackal, I stepped out from my place of concealment.

Lying between my bush (so to speak) and the adjoining one was an enormous panther! I certainly never was so taken aback. We were about eight feet apart, and, as there were no side issues through the thorns, one of us must give way or die. Fortunately there was no question of a hollow bullet this time. My trusty 12-bore Reilly was in my hands. I think we faced each other for half a minute. If ever I saw wrath personified it was then. With ears flat back against its head, and contracted lips showing the white teeth, it glared at me with its fierce eyes, keeping up a snarling growl, and lashing the ground with its tail.

Slowly, slowly, I raised the heavy rifle, and aimed at the broad chest just where the chin allowed me to see it. I recollect now that I remembered to allow for the rise of the ball at so short a distance, and, taking a very fine sight, I pulled the trigger. As I did so I jumped back a step and drew my knife with my right hand.

It was unnecessary, for as the smoke cleared I saw the fierce head dropping on the paws, and the great cat lay still. The shock of the heavy bullet



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had prevented a single movement. The conical ball had entered the left side of the chest and raked all the vitals, causing instantaneous death. The beaters came crowding round to join in cursing the panther's ancestors to the most remote degree. The calves and goats were avenged. It was an old male, and in splendid condition. He was soon fastened on the tonga, and I drove home in triumph.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHASE OF THE WILD DEER IN ENGLAND.

THE original stock of wild deer in England, which is only represented in most districts by the contents of some gentlemen's private parks, as is that of the wild cattle at Chillingham and elsewhere, exists in its pristine state in two places only. On the hills of Exmoor and the Quantocks, and in the surrounding country, the red deer abound. In the New Forest there is a great head of fallow-deer, and also a few red deer, which last are, however, of modern origin.

Although there are a dozen packs of staghounds whose meets are advertised each week in the papers, only two of these concern themselves with the wild deer. These are the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, which hunt the red deer, and the New Forest Deerhounds, whose principal quarry is the fallow-deer, though they kill one or two red deer every year. The remaining packs hunt a stag or hind, which is turned out for the purpose, and which generally returns home in its cart before night. Amongst these are the Royal Buckhounds, so called, I presume, because they never by any chance hunt a buck. Need I explain that the male, female, and

young of the red deer are correctly described as stags, hinds, and calves; while those of the fallow-deer are known as bucks, does, and fawns respectively.

Those sportsmen, then, who wish to enjoy the chase of the English wild deer can do so only by resorting to one of the two districts I have referred to. Having spent a season in each district I propose to give a short account of the sport in both. The Devon and Somerset being the better known and more fashionable, I will commence with that pack.

I.—THE DEVON AND SOMERSET STAGHOUNDS.

These hounds are a pack of great antiquity, but a history of them would be beyond the scope of the present chapter, so I will only refer those interested in the matter to the many books on the subject, such as Collyn's "Chase of the Red Deer," Jefferies' "Red Deer Land," and others. Early in the present reign the head of deer had got very small, but by careful preservation it has now reached such numbers that a hundred head can be killed in a season without permanently affecting the total. The usual number killed is from five-and-twenty to thirty stags between August and October, and twice that number of hinds between November and March. It will thus be seen that the sport is not likely to suffer from want of deer. There is, however, another cause which is likely in time to militate against hunting, and that is, that the deer are gradually migrating away from their original haunts. The *ne plus ultra* of stag-hunting is a gallop across the moor, and in the old

days when all the deer used the coverts adjoining the Royal Forest of Exmoor it could generally be relied upon. The case is far different now. The Forest is no longer royal; sheep, and shepherds' dogs, and, more objectionable than all, tourists, disturb its repose. The tendency of the deer, then, is to take to the great woodlands far from the Forest, where they are not only undisturbed, but can easily reach their staple food, the farmers' crops, among which they make such havoc. I may here say that this is promptly compensated by the Hunt, whose "Deer Damage Fund" pays some hundreds of pounds annually. Every year now deer are reported further and further away from the moor, in districts where they have been unknown during the present century at any rate. It is easy to foresee that "Red Deer Land" will ere long extend from the Severn Sea to Tiverton in the south, and from Barnstaple in the west to Bridgewater in the east. Already deer have been found by the hounds within a few miles of Barnstaple, and taken east of the River Parret. Some seasons back a stag ran from Haddon Woods nearly to Tiverton. The huntsman, meeting a yokel, asked him if he had seen the stag.

"Nay, I hannot," was the answer, "but I zaw a jackass wi' a hurdle on his head down by river."

He had never seen a stag in his life before, but if he is still living, he has probably seen a good many jackasses with hurdles on their heads since.

Unfortunately, the country to which the deer are spreading does not lend itself to enjoyable hunting.

To begin with, it is cultivated, and, therefore, closed to horsemen in the stag-hunting season, as the crops are not yet harvested. Even in winter it is unrideable. This is not because the fences are high banks, for such are habitually negotiated in Wales, Cornwall, and parts of Ireland. Here, unfortunately, the banks are crowned with high, stiff beech hedges through which no horse can get. The deer and hounds easily surmount these. No one who is not familiar with the "deer racks" of Devon would believe through what a small space a royal stag will slip. Meanwhile the field are reduced to hopeless macadamising, and pounding along roads, which generally follow the bottoms of deep valleys, is a very different matter to a gallop over the breezy moor.

This being, then, the habitat of the deer, let us turn to the means by which they are brought to bay, and firstly to the hounds. These are thoroughbred foxhounds, drafted from all the packs in England. The only reason for which they have been drafted, is that they are too large for any English pack of foxhounds. They are, in fact, the giants of the foxhound world. In addition to their great size, they possess the peculiarity of not having their ears rounded, or cut short, according to the usual fashion. This gives the head a nobler appearance. As is well known, all hounds take readily to the scent of the deer, which is very strong. I have frequently seen hounds run hard on a scent which actual eye-witnesses could prove to be an hour old. It is not one of the least of the many mysteries of scent that what the old

writers call "beasts of sweet chace," such as the deer and the hare, should leave so much stronger a scent than the "beasts of stinking chace," such as the fox and the badger.

Turning to the huntsman, we find that until 1892 the horn had been for many years in the hands of Arthur Heal, who certainly knows more of the wiles of the hunted deer and of the method of hunting it than any man living. Even at three-score years and ten he was in his own country

"A rum 'un to follow, a bad 'un to beat."

But the fatigues of the long days, which often extend to twelve hours in the saddle, proved too much for him at last, and he resigned the horn into the hands of his whip, Anthony Huxtable, whose first season has gone far to show that he will be no unworthy successor.

The Mastership, which had been held for so many years by Mr. Bisset—whose personal exertions, seconded by those of "Parson Jack Russell" and Mr. Froude Bellew, did so much for the Devon and Somerset Stag Hunt—passed at his death to Mr. Charles H. Basset, of Watermouth Castle, a Devonshire man born and bred, and formerly an officer in the Royal Navy. Mr. Basset having had the misfortune to lose his hand, his accession to office brought about the singular coincidence that both the Masters of Hounds hunting the wild deer in England were one-handed men.*

The last official of the Hunt whom it will be

* Both have resigned since these words were written.

necessary to notice, but certainly not the least important in providing sport for the field, is Miles, the "harbourer." In summer or winter, rain or shine, it is his duty to be on the ground before daylight. Perched immovably in some convenient tree, he watches the deer returning from their feeding-ground in the dusk of the dawn. Having satisfied himself as to the presence of such a deer as is required for hunting, stag or hind, according to the season, he proceeds to follow its "slot" to the wood where it has taken up its abode for the day. Having ascertained that the tracks lead into a certain covert, his next step is to go round the same in order to make sure that the deer has not emerged the other side. If the wood be a very large one, it will even be necessary for him to cross it, so that when the huntsman comes to play his part, he can show him where to throw his "tufters" into covert so as to come at once upon the deer. I was once an eye-witness to an amusing scene between the huntsman and the harbourer. The latter—not Miles—had reported a warrantable deer in a certain covert, but the "tufters" had quite failed to move him. At last the huntsman expressed a doubt as to the accuracy of the harbouring.

"If your hounds can't find him, I can," was the ready answer, and taking a few steps into the woodland the harbourer cracked his whip. At the sound, and almost under his feet, a splendid "royal" sprang up and crashed through the thicket. I ought, perhaps, to explain that the term "tufters" is applied to the three or four hounds with which the coverts

are generally drawn, the remainder of the pack being shut up in some convenient barn. The reason of this is that the covert probably contains all sorts of deer, stags, hinds, and calves. The tufters are stopped again and again till the required animal is seen to go away, when they are stopped for the last time, and the whole pack is fetched and laid upon the line. Of course, when there is known to be only one deer in a covert this precaution is unnecessary, and the covert is drawn with the pack as in fox-hunting.

The Hunt uniform is scarlet with a silver button, bearing a stag's head and the motto, "Prosperity to Stag-hunting." It is the only Hunt which has a crest and motto of its own.

Having now described the Hunt at some length, let me dip into my old diaries for a couple of representative runs.

A MOORLAND RUN.

The meet for Wednesday, the 3rd of October, 18—, was fixed for Bray Ford, a point almost equidistant from Lynton and Dulverton, and from Barnstaple and Porlock. The legitimate stag-hunting season had nearly reached its close, and the vast fields (sometimes five hundred horsemen) we had seen in August and September had dwindled considerably, though probably over a hundred were present at the meet.

Before I had changed my hack for my hunter, the harbourer approached me and informed me he

had harboured a single stag in Cold Hill Wood, and that the Master intended to try and force him to the moor. Looking up to the height known as Whitefield Down, whose steep slopes towered some hundreds of feet above us, my plans were at once made. I ordered my groom to walk my horse quietly to the top at once, and if the hounds ran that way to look out for me. If, on the other hand, the deer took a line back into the big woodlands, he was to follow and join me as soon as he could.

Soon after eleven the Master gave the signal to draw with the pack, there being only one deer in the covert, and tufters being consequently unnecessary. All went as had been hoped; the stag, who was, however, very nearly "blanched"* by some of the field, succeeded in making Whitefield Down. Up this precipitous steep the field had to follow, and it was soon "bellows to mend" with some of the horses. Confiding in finding a fresh horse at the top, I bucketted my unfortunate hack somewhat unmercifully up the steep. My confidence was not ill-bestowed, for there was George with the mare.

Here, I think, I should mention the mount who carried me so well that day. "Contraband," by "Free Trade," her dam by "The Brigand," was a blood bay, standing sixteen hands two and a half. She was at the time only four years off, but had a much lighter weight to carry than her frame would warrant in future years. This, then, was the mare

* "Blanched" in stag-hunting corresponds to "headed" in fox-hunting, and means the stag is turned from his point by man.

who was waiting for me at the top of the hill. I lost no time in changing horses, for hounds were running hard. For the next mile or so the moor was very bad going, being both boggy and trappy. Soon we cross the Barle, and come out on the high land known as Exe Head. Here hounds are racing half a mile ahead of us, beyond the dreaded bog known as the "Black Pits." Some few risk it; I with most of the others turn along under a fence, and find the going quite bad enough. At last we come out on a steep hillside, and on to the Brendon Road. This gives our horses a chance to get their wind, and at Brendon Two Gates we get on to the moor again. Mr. Karlake and two other knowing ones have second horses waiting here, which some envy, but my young one is going strong and well, and now for the first time I can let her go and extend her tremendous stride through the heather.

As I gallop down Badgeworthy Lees I have time to look round. For miles behind the moor I have crossed is dotted with horsemen—and footmen, too, by Jove, for here is a riderless horse galloping close behind me. There, a mile in front, is a gray patch fleeting across the moor—the pack. I push on, and in a minute or two am galloping down the grassy turf of the Doone Valley. Now Badgeworthy Water is forded, and I gallop up the long slope of Mr. Snow's Deer Park (so-called). Here I jump my second and last bank, the first having been coming up to Yard Down. There is very little jumping on the moor, though there are plenty of falls.



Directly after I made a bad mistake. An excited shepherd holloaing led me to think I had overridden the line, and that the stag had turned short back to Badgeworthy Water. I turned round, and actually rode nearly back there till, meeting a couple of tailed-off hounds holding on the line, I saw I was mistaken, and once more retraced my way to the Exford Road. The rest of the leading division had now gained considerably on me, but I knew the stag's point must be Horner, and sent my mare along fast through the heather to Lee Hill, whence I descended rapidly into the valley, and followed the brook towards the sea. Yes, there, just above Horner Green, is the stag at bay, his back against some rails. Before him lies a hound on the stones, unhurt fortunately, but another licks a nasty wound, while the rest bay furiously. The stag is roped at once by Anthony and knifed by Arthur. He was a fine, rather dark stag, with a splendid head of twelve points. This was the finest moorland run for fourteen years, and I doubt if there has been such another since. Out of the large field, there were thirteen or fourteen in at the death.

I cannot conclude better than with an extract from the account written at the time for *Horse and Hound* by Arthur Heal's son, and consequently inspired by the huntsman. He says: "A splendid run, entirely in the open, and one of the best for many a year—in fact there could be no better. The distance is full twenty miles, and the time from find to finish one hour and fifty minutes, without the slightest

check. Among those who went well with the leading division throughout were Mr. Basset, the Duchess of Hamilton, Mrs. T. Fitzwilliam [since dead*], Miss Kinglake, Miss Hurst [riding a mare of Snaffle's*], Captain Curzon, the Hon. C. Bampfylde, Mr. Karlake, Q.C. [since dead*], Mr. J. Budd [since dead*], Mr. A. Hamilton ["Cinqfoil," of *The Field*, who wrote a capital account of the run*], — ["Snaffle"*], Messrs. Coleridge, Rocke (two), Passmore, and Slader."

So ended the great moorland gallop. Before we moved away homewards, some score more horsemen had turned up, making the total up to thirty-five according to "Cinqfoil," or thirty-three according to "Dunkery" in *Land and Water*, who pithily concludes, "All else were absolutely out of it."

A GALLOP OVER THE GRASS.

This run occurred after the end of the legitimate stag-hunting season, the Master having granted the longed-for favour of "a few by-days." The date was October 16th, Tuesday, and consequently a fortnight all but a day after the big run I described last.

Properly speaking I ought to have begun with a prologue, and told the story of the run of September the 24th. Suffice it to say that on that day, the meet being at Haddon, hounds were laid on at 4 p.m. on to the line of a *one-horned stag*, who beat them finally in thick mist and gathering darkness at a place called Steert.

On the day of which I speak, then, the meet

* My notes and remarks.—SNAFFLE.

was again at Haddon. The harbourer reported a stag to be lying in Huscombe Wood, close to his own cottage. The tufters found him at once, and as he broke, we of the field, waiting on the opposite hill, could plainly see he was a *one-horned stag*. To put the matter beyond all doubt, he took us field for field, the same line as he had done three weeks before. But I anticipate.

The Master came for the pack, the tufters having been duly stopped at a farm called Greenslade. The field clattered after the pack down the rough road, and at twelve o'clock they were laid on. They commenced to run at once at a truly terrific pace, and this time it was all sound going, grass fields and big banks, and plenty of handy gates for those who preferred them.

We rose the slopes of Blagdon Hill, and emerged on some common-like land through which the West Somerset Mineral Railway runs. This we crossed near Gupworthy, and on to a little heather at Lype Hill, hounds driving as hard as ever. Here Arthur gets his second horse, and leads the way for a while, hounds making as if for Dunkery Beacon, which now towers above us, and on whose eastern slope we exchange grass for heather again.

The change of ground makes no difference in the pace, and hounds run as fast as ever. Through the Parsonage Wood they crash, and just below Horner Mill they set up the stag, at exactly a quarter past one. The run up to here was nearly fourteen miles as the crow flies, so that the pace was decidedly

better than in the previous run, but the time was less in all. But our panting horses were not to have their well-earned rest yet. The stag had turned to bay on the side of a steep cutting where no one could have got at him. After facing the baying pack for a few minutes he broke his bay, making as if for Leigh Hill, but he was unequal to the effort required, and turned again seaward. Past Holnicote he went, and a furlong from the shore he again faced his foes in an angle between two stone walls. His one horn completely kept the pack off, and, strange to say, his boldest adversary was a small cottager's cur which had joined in the chase. Probably he did not know his danger as the great hounds did.

Presently he scrambled over the wall at his back, and running over the stony beach, plunged into the Severn Sea, followed by the pack, and disappeared from our sight round the great cliffs of Bossington Point. Time, one hour and forty-five minutes from the moment hounds were laid on.

What was to be done? No boat was available, but our Master was a man of resource. A coasting schooner was beating down Channel on the ebb tide, and at her next tack she was hailed.

"Will you lend us a boat to take our stag?"

"Your what?"

"The deer. Send your boat ashore and you shall have a sovereign."

This was plain enough to anybody, and smartly the craft was hove to and her boat lowered. Two hands rowed ashore to us, and Anthony was put on

board and started in pursuit of the stag. Some time elapsed before the boat returned with the stag in tow, and landing him just where he had left the shore, he soon yielded up his life. The boatmen, who said they had never seen a stag before, were much interested, but had to hasten on board their craft not to lose the tide.

The stag proved to be a very old one with hardly any points on his perfect horn. In other words he was what is called a "bater," because his antlers, having attained in previous years their perfection of twelve or more points, have commenced to abate some of their number. The broken horn was only about eight inches long, and attached to it was another piece of about the same length swinging loose, and attached only by skin. This horn had only one point, the "brow."

Meanwhile the ladies, who had gone so well in the previous run, and who were living at Porlock, which is close to, had heard the hounds and hurried out to see. They hospitably invited us to their house. Both there and afterwards the discussion on the question, "Which was the finer run?" raged hotly, and even I, who played my part in both, find it hard to answer. One thing is clear, that since that season neither has been equalled, far less surpassed. I recently read in the papers that Mr. Basset's delicate health has forced him to give up the Mastership, and his successor is nominated. May he soon have as fine a run to chronicle.

Prosperity to stag-hunting!

II.—THE NEW FOREST DEERHOUNDS.

Ever since I had had a season on Exmoor I had conceived a strong desire to give the New Forest pack a turn, but it was not till a couple of years later that I was able to gratify this, and sending three horses down to Lyndhurst, I followed them myself a day or two after the New Year.

I am not able to give so many particulars as to the history of this pack as I did of the Devon and Somerset, but I believe that they have none, and were simply established by the present Master, Mr. Lovell,* who has had them for many years. The nominal huntsman, Allen, is little more than a whipper-in to the Master, to whose knowledge of the woodland deer and woodcraft the sport is principally due.

The hounds, like the Devon and Somerset, are a dog pack, and are not bred by the Master. They are recruited every year from the unentered draft of the Bramham Moor Foxhounds, and are of ordinary foxhound size. During the tufting the hounds are not shut up owing to the paucity of buildings in the Forest, but are coupled and held by men in the same way that the *relais* in French stag-hunting are.

The seasons correspond to those on Exmoor, and are buck-hunting in autumn and doe-hunting in winter. In addition to this they have a second season for hunting the male deer, about Easter, when the bucks have regained their condition after the rutting season, and before they have shed their horns.

* Since retired.

The uniform of the Hunt is green plush.

The nature of the country, that is, of the New Forest, is well known. The Forest proper extends over 60,000 acres, and consists mainly of large woodlands. These are divided on the hilltops in most cases by extensive heaths, and in the bottoms by green marshy valleys. The season I had chosen was not quite the best for doe-hunting, as I found out they did not hunt in February, that being the month during which the does drop their fawns. As I had to leave for India early in March, I only had the month of January in which to see this pack at work.

A WOODLAND GALLOP.

On Monday, the 6th of January, the meet was fixed for Little Stony Cross, not a great way from where a monument marks the deathplace of William Rufus, who met his death when engaged in this very sport. The direct descendants of the peasant who took the dead monarch's body to Winchester in his cart still live in the neighbourhood.

It was a soaking wet day and not one on which any one would care to sit still in the rain, so I accompanied the Master and the tufters. The harbouring in the New Forest is done by the Forest keepers, who reported some hinds to be in the neighbourhood. As the Master was anxious to have a run with a red deer, he proceeded to try for them, and the tufters were soon running merrily. After some little time, as I was waiting outside the fir wood they were in, a fine young stag bounded over

the fence close to me and galloped across the heather. The tufters were promptly stopped, and the red deer were given up for that day.

Tufting for the more common object of chase now commenced, and a single doe having at last been got away, the pack were laid on at one o'clock. The doe ran for some time through the woods, and then crossed the heath near Ocknell Pond and plunged once more into the woods the other side. At a quarter to two, after a smart gallop, the hounds pulled down a fawn which, unknown to us, had been running with her. No unnecessary time was lost over this yearling, but the old doe had got a good bit of law before they were on her line again. Hounds continued to run merrily over a country which was then entirely unknown to me. Suffice it to say the going varied only from the muddy rides through the big woodlands, to the more pleasant spins across the heather. At last, after running for three hours all but ten minutes, we killed. It was a remarkably fine doe, and the run was as good a one as I was fated to see with these hounds.

The Master was most anxious to kill a hind, and again and again were whole mornings spent in tufting for them. On the following Thursday, after a long gallop with the tufters, we succeeded in separating a hind. The pack was laid on, ran hard for five-and-twenty minutes, and unfortunately changed on to three does. Our chance of sport was over, but, worse still, part of the pack got on to a buck and

killed him. The same luck followed us on the following Thursday, when again we changed from a hind to a doe a short time after laying on the pack.

On Thursday, the 23rd, it was blowing a gale of wind. The tufters found five hinds in Ashley Wood, and a very pretty sight it was to see them run across the long stretch of open moor to Appleslade, where unfortunately we lost sight of the tufters, and the gale which was blowing prevented our hearing them. The Master feared if he laid on to these hinds we should lose the pack, so decided against the red deer. Laid on to a doe which had been viewed at the bottom of Appleslade Wood, hounds ran fast uphill and across the plain to Oakley Wood and back again. Then on again they ran, but to cut a long story short, after an hour and a half's fast run, they ran among a lot of bucks in Puckpits Wood, and had to be stopped. This was the last of my seven days with these hounds, but my luck had not done with me. Having to go to London on the 30th, I elected to hunt with the New Forest Foxhounds, which were nearer than the Deerhounds, so as to make sure of catching a train between four and five. Our sport was moderate, but with the Deerhounds it was different, as the Master's perseverance was rewarded at last. After a very fine run lasting some hours, they killed a young hind near Fording-bridge, at the extreme north-west corner of the Forest.

It may seem presumptuous to pass an opinion on a pack of which, after all, I saw so little, but my

opinion is that sport in the New Forest might be greatly improved by reducing the head of deer. This would at all events lessen the chances of changing, which so frequently spoils a run there. The hounds seem to give no particular preference to the scent of the hunted deer, which the Devon and Somerset pack certainly do. So do the French packs which hunt the roe. The master of a Brittany pack told me this was effected by never checking the young hounds when they change on to a fresh deer. Experience soon teaches them that that way they catch nothing, and they thus learn to stick to the hunted deer.

Nor should the thinning of the deer be carried out by stalking or any quiet method. It should be pursued with a pack of noisy little hounds, bassets for choice, and only carried out in the big woodlands where these gregarious animals congregate. Not only would the deer diminish in numbers, but the fawns, which would pass the guns uninjured, would learn to seek safety from hounds by leaving the woodlands. In other words, they would learn the lesson foxes are taught in the cub-hunting season. Also the deer, who are now mostly collected within a small radius, would take to more outlying parts of the Forest to obtain the peace which would be denied them in their present quarters, and would thence give long and fine runs.

From the riding point of view, the New Forest sport is as far inferior to the moorland runs of the Exmoor pack, as it is superior to those they often

have when the field hardly get off the roads at all, in the Dulverton country, for instance.

Moreover, the hottest day of August generally finds a cool breeze blowing over the heights of Exmoor, but I am told that in the New Forest the heat and flies are sometimes unbearable during the buck-hunting season.

Exmoor, however, is very bleak and cold in winter, which the New Forest is not. The latter, too, has the great advantage for many people that the kennels are only an hour from London, whereas to reach those at Exford takes seven or eight.

To those who are familiar with neither sport I would say, "Try and see both." This is sport which is older probably than any now followed in the world. It is the same, and probably conducted very similarly, to what it was when Norman William ruled the land. Compared to it, fox-hunting, over which four and a half millions are now annually spent in England, is a thing of yesterday. Long may it flourish.

CHAPTER XIII.

DUCK-SHOOTING IN THE EAST INDIES.

THE first place in the Indies, to use an old-world phrase, with which I became familiar, was the Island of Ceylon, which, as everybody knows, lies at the extreme south of the great Indian peninsula, and only a few degrees north of the equator. In this lovely island, with its then unequalled facilities for sport, I passed six years, devoting all my spare time to the gun, the rifle, and the hound.

Half this period had elapsed before I had any chance of duck-shooting. I was then residing at Point de Galle, an old Dutch fort, almost at the extreme south of the island (now dismantled), to which I have referred before in the chapter on snipe-shooting.

I had been tied to my work for nearly seven months, so I was delighted to be able to get away for three days' leave, so as to carry out a long-devised plan of teal-shooting with my old friend, Jim G——, then employed as Police Magistrate at Matara, some score of miles further down the coast.

Accordingly, one morning's sunrise found me ensconced on the box-seat of the Royal Matara Mail

Coach. The cool breeze which met us, and which was doubly refreshing after a night which had been particularly hot, and during which the mosquitoes had fed as if their appetite had been laid on for the occasion, increased my natural feeling of exhilaration at getting a holiday, and explained the zest with which I listened to the cantering of the willing nags, and to the execrably blown bugle, which here supplies the place of the "yard of tin." Collecting passengers as we rolled through the long street of the native town, we soon passed the lovely headland of Bona Vista, the southern point of the harbour, and I was fairly on my way to the most southern point of British India, or rather of

"India's utmost isle, Taprobane."

Passing the Cogalla Lake, famous among the inhabitants of Galle for picnic parties and crocodile-shooting, we make our third stage by arriving at Welligam, a little town sixteen miles on our way. Just before entering it we pass a colossal human statue, representing the *Kousta Rajah*, or Leprous King, of Ceylon, which is carved out of the solid rock at the roadside.

Our road from here to Matara is less inhabited, but the whole coast road from Negombo on the west to Dikwella on the east coast may almost be spoken of as one street—a hundred and fifty miles long. We reached Matara at 10 p.m., dusty and hungry, and quite ready for tub and breakfast. Jim's quarters were in the quaint little Dutch fort north of the river, which still bears the inscription, "Redout

van Eyck," over the gate. In the evening we visited the main fort, and made preparations for the ensuing day.

Next morning we were off at daylight, and a good horse brought us to Dikwella Rest-house to breakfast. Towards noon we left again, and a five-mile drive landed us at the "tank" I had come so far to visit. Here two canoes were waiting for us, and we hastened to embark. We could see large flocks of water-fowl dispersed on the surface of the water, which is about a mile long and nearly half as broad. Amongst them were many teal, the others consisting mostly of the inevitable "did-he-do-it," a plover (*Hydrophasianus Sinensis*) which like many other birds gets its name from its cry. Here and there were single darters (*Plotinus melanogaster*), a cormorant-like bird, which has the curious habit of swimming submerged with only its neck and head above water, in which position it looks more like a snake than anything else. Of course, neither of these birds were shot at. We advanced in line, and I opened the ball by dropping three teal out of some skeins that swept over us. We had secured the first, and were paddling towards the second, when I, who was watching the third, saw a huge head appear close to it. With one snap of his great jaws the crocodile secured my teal and disappeared. The men only laughed, and paddling to the spot, handed me a paddle, with which I could distinctly feel the brute's side and forearm not a yard beneath us, but he seemed to take no notice. I must say it was

rather a creepy feeling to be so close to the huge saurian, but these tank crocodiles are as harmless to man as the Ceylon river alligators are dangerous. They managed, however, to secure a good many of our wounded birds before the afternoon was out, but the boatmen did not mind them the least, jumping overboard without hesitation close to where the brutes had just showed themselves.

The teal seemed very unwilling to leave this tank, probably because there was no other great sheet of water near. They bunched up alternately at each end of the water and remained motionless, watching us till the canoes got nearly within gunshot. Then they rose and swept past us, and for a minute or two it was load and fire pretty quickly. Twice, at least, I managed to align two and kill both with one barrel. Mixed with the teal were a quaint little bird with which I was not familiar, but which proved to be grebe in splendid plumage.

At length the teal began to abandon the place. We were paddling to pick up some wounded birds, when I saw a magnificent eagle, who seemed anxious to assist. I gave him a barrel, and Jim gave him two, but though he staggered about and was very sick, he got away. This was a disappointment, as they are by no means common in Ceylon. In fact, I cannot recall ever having seen another in the low country. I once did see, and followed, a vulture, which is said to be unknown there, but the brute was very shy, and after half an hour's chase, I took a long shot with a ball cartridge, the only result of

which was a hole in the stump on which he had been sitting.

I also shot an egret heron, but finding, as I expected, that we were too late in the year for the splendid plumes, for which they are alone valued, we spared the others. We now tried leaving our birds where they fell, and watching over them with ball cartridge. Needless to say not a crocodile would show up.

At length the sun got low, and having got our hands and faces well burnt, we voted it enough, and made for our carriage. Here our bag was laid out, and was found to consist of fifteen couple. We had only knocked off just in time, for no sooner had we started than down came the rain, and we had a wet drive to Tangalle. This is a pretty little place, the residence of a solitary member of the Civil Service. However, as the then occupant of the berth had only been married about forty-eight hours, we were not welcomed with the delight with which white faces are generally hailed in such out-of-the-way stations, and returned to a fairly comfortable rest-house to dinner.

Unfortunately the next day was the last of my leave, so we left Tangalle at seven, passing the scene of our previous day's sport on our way. We stopped some time at Dondra Head, which is, with the exception of the Malay Peninsula, the most southerly point of Asia. It is a curious feeling to stand on this rocky headland and realise that straight before one is no land of any kind, or indeed anything solid,

till you reach the eternal Antarctic ice. There are some fine ruins on the point, and also a modern temple of some reputation for sanctity. Here the coast road naturally turns north again, and we followed it back to Matara.

After lunch I ought to have caught the afternoon coach, but somehow managed to miss it. However, there fortunately was an extra one that day, so no harm was done.

My next experience of Eastern duck-shooting was in India itself. When we marched into our station and made inquiries about its sporting capabilities we were told it was a poor shooting place, except for wild fowl in winter. Our first year there was, however, almost rainless, and consequently the sport was below the average. Nevertheless I will try to give the reader some idea of a couple of days there.

The duck did not arrive till late in November, and it was on the 4th of December that I made my first attack upon them, in company with two friends, whose nationality I need hardly explain when I say that their names were respectively O'N—— and MacB——. Our first draw was a small tank with steep, rocky shores. Directly we arrived there we saw a good many duck resting on the water. We decided that I was to go on and ensconce myself on the shore to our left, while MacB—— remained stationary, and O'N—— went round the right shore towards the place where most of the duck were lying.

Presently I heard the report of his gun. The next thing I noticed was a string of wild geese coming down the tank towards me. Before they could reach me, however, MacB—— tumbled one down with a broken wing, and the rest rose out of shot. I managed nevertheless to take toll of the skeins of duck which swept round the tank. After a bit they seemed to decide that as *we* were apparently not going to quit the tank *they* must, and they disappeared over the hills, heading north-west. Meanwhile, MacB—— had been firing “minute guns” at his goose, which had paddled out nearly into the middle of the tank. I never saw a bird take so much shot; but at last the wind drifted it within range of me, and two final barrels finished it. I really believe, at the Indian price of powder and shot, it had cost half-a-crown in cartridges, and, I may add, when it came to table it wasn't worth eating.

The day being still young and the duck all gone, the question was what to do. I suggested that we should follow the duck. We knew there was a tank of unknown size at a place called Sirinagar, which lay to the north-eastward. We did not know the exact distance, but estimated it at about six miles. It proved to be nearer eight. The road was a very bad one, mostly deep sand, but at last we saw some fine trees—a sure sign of water in that thirsty land—in the distance; and after a final bit of most villainous road we reached the tank. It proved to be the shape of the palm of the left hand, the road passing by the wrist. The thumb, as it were, was a creek running up from

the main tank and separated from it by a ridge of high rock. The bund, or embankment, was a short one, and ran across a narrow valley near the root of the little finger, to continue my comparison.

To our delight there were plenty of duck about the tank, which was nearly a mile long, but not half that width at the widest part. Our plan of attack was similar to our previous one, only as I had to go some way round to get to the thumb creek, I started first, picking up a quail in some dead cotton on my way. I had scarcely reached the creek when I heard O'N——'s gun right opposite. I hastened to crouch under some tamarisk bushes, and hardly had I done so when I heard the whistle of wings and a wisp of teal alighted a little way to my right. They were rather out of shot, but as the wind was pretty strong up the creek I thought they were worth waiting for. The event proved I was right, and presently I guessed the leading one to be within range, and rightly so, for he turned over to the shot. The others went back, but a flight of duck from the main water came over, and I got one to my left barrel. I had to wait a bit till the wind brought my teal ashore, and then coasted right round the creek. By this time the birds were all on the alert, and when I had crossed the tongue of land I found they were mostly right out in the middle of the water. Just then O'N—— fired up at the top of the tank. I saw a wisp of teal rise to the shot and drop over into my creek. I turned back, and a little quiet stalking brought me right on to them. I potted one, and as they rose I got a second.

So the day went on, but as it was rather late when we arrived, we could not do the tank justice. We were also sadly bothered for want of a boat, as all the wounded made for the middle of the tank, where we could not get them. The eagles—several of which, attracted by the firing perhaps, appeared on the scene—could, and did. At the end of the day our bag totalled up four teal, six duck, one quail, one goose, and four various—sixteen head. With these we returned home, but I had made up my mind the Sirinagar tank was by no means exhausted, and owed me at least one more day. The sequel will show that it paid the debt.

The duck and geese we had bagged were all unfamiliar to me, the common mallard not being amongst them. One variety was a very beautiful one with a coral-red bill. Of this breed the drake has a scarlet head, whilst the female is dingy brown. The goose was also a stranger, and he, too, had a red bill. Teal, I fancy, are alike all the world over.

My arrangements enabled me to get away again that day week, and mindful of the weary toil through the deep sand, from which we had suffered on the previous occasion, we sent our Arabs on to the spot where the metalled road ended. There we left our trap and lunch to follow, and cantered on to the tank, thus arriving in good time.

There were more duck about, but of course they were shyer. My companion B—— and I divided, I taking the creek as before. Here I was able to open the ball with a teal, and B——'s gun replied to mine. Leaving the creek I walked up the rocky bank of the main pond.

Some of the birds were lying close under the rocks, and here I got a couple of duck right and left. My *shikari* made rather a fuss about going in, saying there were *muggurs* (alligators), which I am sure was not the case. At last, however, he went in and fetched out several of my birds. At the top of the tank, where it became a mere creek, I met B——, and by following the creek a little way we each got a teal. Then we cut over to my old creek again, I forget with what result, and finally came up together to where that creek and the main water met.

All the birds we could see were a long way out. I believe every bird has a very fair notion of the range of a gun, but their ideas are conservative. Consequently a choke-bore is a little beyond them—at present. On this occasion a coral-billed drake was lying some way out from the point on which we were standing.

“I wonder if the choke-bore would reach that fellow?” I said.

“Never,” was B——’s answer; “he’s a hundred yards out.”

“Eighty, I should say, but it’s very difficult to judge over water. I shall try anyway.” So saying I put up my gun, aiming well over the drake, and let him have my left barrel—medium choke.

Almost without a flutter he dropped his handsome head, dead. We waited a little while for the wind to drift him in to us. Then the *shikari* waded out for him, and we adjourned to breakfast.

Although it was nearly midwinter, the Indian sun

was hot enough, and we were quite willing to lie and smoke for an hour after our meal. This also gave the birds time to regain confidence a bit.

After a good long rest we started off again, worked up to the top, changed sides, and worked back again. Just as I reached the embankment a wisp of teal got up wild and swept over into some rice-fields in the swampy valley beneath. I followed and bagged one. To my delight, at the sound of the shot I heard the familiar "scape! scape!" and turning round saw a snipe go down the valley. Owing probably to the want of rain, snipe were very scarce in Central India that year, and I had not had a shot at one yet. I plunged into the mud, and in a quarter of an hour I returned, dirty but delighted, with a couple of long-bills.

At last the fun came to a close. Many of the duck had left the tank, and those that remained were huddled in the middle and not to be moved even by a bullet being dropped among them. There were also (alas!) a good many wounded birds whose strength was still fully equal to keeping away from the shore. These we could only regret, so we totalled up our bag as follows: fifteen duck, five teal, two snipe; total twenty-two head, a satisfactory result that year for two guns.

It must not be supposed that this was an out-of-the-way day's duck-shooting in India—quite the contrary. I have described it principally because it was one of those days which remain in one's memory, whilst an old diary enables me to give the exact bag.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER ELEPHANTS ON THE KAMBUKENAAR RIVER.

IT might be supposed after our experience near Chilaw, that Will and I would be content to let "my lord the elephant" severely alone; but as a matter of fact the encounter had only increased our desire to bring one or more of the mighty pachyderms fairly to hand. Although we had learned that in that case the elephant had died of his wounds, F—— was his probable slayer, and we wanted to kill one ourselves. Nearly a year elapsed without our having any opportunity to do so, although I had assisted at the death of my first buffalo in the interval, and very nearly at my own at the same time. The incident may bear relating, especially as it points a moral. During a short trip to one of the immense ruined cities of Central Ceylon, I had met at a rest-house on the road no less a person than V——, the elephant-shot *par excellence* of the day, who, with F—— before mentioned, had formed the Prince of Wales' body-guard on his elephant shoot in 1876. He had suggested a turn after buffalo, and as I always had a rifle with me, I gladly assented. To cut the story short, on the outskirts of a tank I found, and dropped, a fine bull.

With the rashness of ignorance I rushed through the deep mud towards my game. When only a few feet separated us, to my horror the brute got on his knees, and with a flounder assumed his normal position, the picture of concentrated wrath. Not till then did I think of reloading, but the cartridges had jammed and I could not lay my hand on my extractor. A minute of horrible expectation followed, in which I hardly dared work the breech-action to try and loosen the cartridges. The situation was desperate, as the brute was obviously regaining strength, and in flight through the knee-deep mud I had no chance. At last with one final tear-up of the dirt with his horns, he began the advance, and I my retreat, still facing him.

Just as I was wondering whereabouts those thick horns would take me, a shot rang out. It was from V——'s "unerring tube," and the brute collapsed for the last time, half smothering me with mud and water as he fell. The lesson was learnt, however, and from that day I have never approached any fallen game without first reloading.

After this I may be allowed to pay my tribute to the honest Irish heart that is still for ever—the more so, perhaps, as a buffalo was the immediate, and an elephant the more remote, cause of V——'s death. Long-continued success over his gigantic game (the last time I ever saw him he told me he had just killed his hundred and second elephant) had perhaps made him over-bold. One day he was following up an elephant in full flight, and I believe had actually hold of the brute's tail. The maddened animal kicked out

behind, hurling V—— far away, and nearly breaking all his ribs. Abscess of the liver supervened on the blow, as it often does. He was, however, successfully operated on, and returned to Ireland to recruit. It was at the end of his leave I saw him last, quite restored to health. Not long after he shot a buffalo, which in falling pinned him down by its weight. Before he could extricate himself, the herd, either charging or in mad flight, dashed past, and one of the great hooves struck him again in the fatal spot. Again abscess supervened, and this time death followed, and the Ceylon elephants lost their deadliest foe.

Will had been acting as Government Agent for some months at Hambantota, a most uninteresting spot on the east coast, where he was the only white man. The little settlement is, however, of great interest to the sportsman as it practically marks the extreme limit of civilisation in this direction, and the strip between it and the adjoining station of Batticaloa was then the very best big-game country in the island. Therefore when Will wrote to me and informed me that his relief had sailed from England, and asked if I were game for a month up the coast, I was delighted to reply in the affirmative.

Not much more than a month later I embarked on the Colonial Government steamer in company with Will's relief. The day after we left Colombo we were at Galle, and thence we reached Hambantota by daylight the following day. I was soon ashore, for my tents and share of stores had come by road, and also gone on. I had, however, with me the

important item of rifles, and no less than six firearms, being my own 12-bore, a second borrowed one, two Will had borrowed, and my Express rifle and gun. All these were sent off in charge of my servant to join the camp, which had started two days before.

The day was one of bustle, for not only had my chum to hand over his official duties, cash, and convict establishment—these latter are employed in getting salt—but his temporary home was being broken up, his wife going on to friends at Batticaloa by the same steamer that had brought us. However, it was all done somehow, and we sat down to dinner free for a month, at which time we had to rejoin the steamer at the same spot on her return journey round the island.

Before the sun was up we had said good-bye to Hambantota, for we had a long drive before us. Will's Arab trotted gaily along, and with a halt for lunch we reached the carts before dark, and a very imposing show they made; but rice soon goes when there are a dozen mouths to feed, and there was literally no chance of supplies before us.

Among the other retainers waiting for us were two who would play a very important part in our next month's existence. These were the "trackers," the best known of whom, Sin 'Appu by name, Will, with characteristic good-heartedness, had made over to me. He was a little, old, very dirty-looking native, his natural ugliness not being improved by various scars, of different dates, but all produced by wild animals, mostly by bears. Small and mean as he looked he

had the courage of a hero, and would stand perfectly unmoved with a second rifle though a charging elephant was within a few yards.

I know no native hunters who in any respect approach the Ceylon trackers in their power of following up an animal. They will take up the track of an elephant, and follow it for hours over every description of ground, even slab rock where to an European eye no trace of any kind could be seen, through a maze of other tracks, till at last they can point to the track into which the water is still oozing, and you know it is time to get ready your weapons.

The trackers reported that there were plenty of elephants between us and the Kambukenaar River, which here forms the boundary between the Southern and Eastern Provinces of Ceylon, and after some consultation we decided to pitch our standing camp there. This was important, as sending back a note by Will's groom to that effect placed us within the possibility of communication with the outer world if it became necessary.

The dog-cart left next morning to travel 150 miles back to Colombo. As there were no roads at all before us, it was useless to try and take it further. That day we travelled on as there was no chance of game, and the next morning we again started at dawn. The noise of striking camp awoke us, and Will took a rifle and strolled on before the long train. He had been gone nearly an hour when a shot roused me from a doze. It was quickly followed by another, and the whiz of a bullet not very

far away. The firing continued, and, as the bullets showed an inclination to enfilade the long line of carts, I slipped on a pair of boots, and catching up a rifle, hurried on.

Before I had gone a quarter of a mile I saw Will sitting on a tree-trunk.

"Here, I say," I hailed him, "what have you been up to? It's a wonder you haven't bagged a bullock or a coolie."

For all answer he pointed to some long grass about thirty yards from him. Cocking my rifle I walked towards it, only in my turn to be put to flight by the most horrible stench I have ever smelt.

It proceeded from a bull-buffalo, who had advanced towards Will with vicious intent, but fortunately the Express with a solid bullet broke his shoulder. Will, however, found it very difficult to dispatch him with this weapon, and no doubt several of the bullets that had come our way had passed through the beast. At last he fell, and not till then did his conqueror discover a large open wound on his flank, full of maggots, the smell of which put him to flight effectually. Although emaciated to a skeleton, he had a particularly fine head, and Sin 'Appu was left to remove it. Two hours later we halted till dark, the trackers going to look for game.

The jungle we were entering did not at all respond to the popular idea of tropical forests, for it consisted of dense thorn-covert mostly about five feet high, only to be penetrated by the well-worn game paths. Further on we reached very different scenery—the

well-known and lovely "Park country," where large grass-covered rolling plains alternate with clumps of fine trees and covert. This is the height of perfection in a shooting country, but at this time we were a good many days' march from the "Park."

The trackers were waiting for us when we completed our night-march, and told us they had found a small herd not far away. Arrangements for an early start were soon made, and we turned in again. I say "again" because we had followed our old plan of sleeping in a cart during the night journey.

Next morning the rising sun found us already *en route*. The beauty of those tropical mornings will always remain with me. All was gray a minute back, but swiftly the red ball rises on the horizon. In ten minutes it is day, the dewdrops shine on every leaf, and our long shadows are surrounded with a luminous outline. I believe this is scientifically called a *perihelion*, and I have only seen it in Ceylon. A peacock screams defiance from yonder stump, and the great black *wandara* monkeys greet the day with loud guttural cries like cheers, "Houwah! Houwah!" We cannot linger, however. If you stand a minute the grass all round writhes with land-leeches hastening to the banquet you provide; and see the velvety look of the dead branch by your elbow. It is covered with ticks. Brush against it, and a score of them will soon be burying themselves in your skin, each one burning like a red-hot knitting needle. Besides, Sin 'Appu turns round with a grin, pointing to a branch freshly broken. The giant game is before us, and while we

hasten after the trackers let me describe the animal we are seeking.

Although Ceylon is only separated by a few miles of straits, interspersed with the ridge of rocks and reefs known as Adam's Bridge, from India proper, the *fauna* of the island shows many notable differences from that of the peninsula. The tiger, universally distributed throughout the latter, is wanting in the former. So is the bison, which is said, on very slight grounds to my idea, to have formerly been known in Ceylon. The fox is also wanting, and the jackal is a rare animal, while the very hares are of different species.

As marked as anything is the distinction between the elephants of the two countries. The Ceylon elephant, if not identical with that of the Malay Peninsula (*E. sumatriensis*), presents many points of resemblance with that species. It is smaller than *Elephas indicus*, more "leggy," and has a shorter tail. The head is less handsome, and altogether it is wanting in the look of high breeding one sees in the Indian animal. Almost the most marked difference is in the ivory. The Ceylon elephants have no tusks, the bulls sometimes developing tushes about a foot long. During a seven years' residence in Ceylon I never heard of but one tusker—the celebrated Yatiantota rogue, which was killed by two friends of mine after a struggle lasting many hours. During his career this elephant had certainly killed a score of human beings. His appearance may be familiar to the reader as his fore-part, beautifully mounted by

Ward, formed the central object in the Ceylon Court at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition.

The trackers advanced rapidly, we following with some difficulty. At last the tracks became burning fresh, and Sin 'Appu signed to us to uncase the rifles, for mackintosh covers are a necessity in these damp jungles. A short further advance was made, and then it was obvious the herd were beyond a low ridge covered with higher jungle, whence low rumblings and breaking of branches were plainly audible. Sin 'Appu wormed himself up to the ridge, and returning reported seven elephants, three just in front and the rest rather to the right. We decided in whispers that I should form the right attack, Will waiting till I gave the signal. Sin 'Appu led me about sixty yards up, and then we noiselessly ascended the crest. Before I could drop behind a tree there I had seen an elephant, and that so close to me that my heart beat quick. Nothing strikes the beginner at this sport so vividly as the nearness which is necessary for success, for shooting at less than twenty yards' range is obviously unfamiliar to all. In this case I could hardly believe we were unseen, for it seemed to me I could almost touch the great brute. It was a nice bull, and when I saw it was standing carelessly flapping its ears. I signed to Sin 'Appu to give the signal. He slipped back to do so, while I raised my 12-bore. At the report of Will's rifle I fired, but the bull only staggered, and my second shot was ineffective. Trumpeting loudly the herd crashed off in all directions. I seized my second rifle and ran as hard as I could

after mine. This particular valley was a bit more open, so with a desperate spurt I ranged alongside till I could see the jaw-bone, and fired under the ear. This shot brought him down on his head, but before I could reload he was up again and, whether in confusion or rage I know not, swung round towards me. I had meanwhile got my wind a bit, and as I was not five yards from him had not much difficulty in finding the fatal spot this time, and my first elephant fell. Will, who had had more time, had done even better, for he had dropped his dead on the spot, and might have shot another had anything good come his way, which it did not.

That night we tasted the hunter's delicacy, elephant's trunk, but I can't say I think much of it. The foot is also said to be good eating, but is rather an expensive dish, as Rowland Ward was paying a guinea apiece for them at this time. Not that we sold any of ours, but they were in great demand for presents, making as they do capital footstools, liqueur stands, cigar cabinets, and other nicknacks.

It was nearly dusk before these trophies reached camp, for cutting them off is a weary job. The trackers were thus prevented from preceding us as usual, and next morning our night journey had brought us on unexplored ground. We therefore sent the men off towards the sea, while we took a turn inland. All we saw, however, were some spotted deer, and were glad to bag a buck, as meat was a bit short. When I awoke from a nap about three o'clock the trackers had not returned, and, Will being lazy, I took my 12-bore and went out alone.

For a long time I saw nothing, till at last I noticed some dark spots a good long way off. The glass showed them to be a herd of buffalo. They were near a belt of jungle, which I could reach by making a considerable *détour*, and the belt was to leeward of them. Accordingly I started off, but the sun was low before I got to the spot I had selected. Luckily, however, the herd had fed along the covert, not away from it. Careful examination convinced me the best chance was at one of two bulls some hundred yards to my right. Once more I withdrew, and circled round to where I had seen them. I had hit it off exactly, for neither was fifty yards from me.

Having got breath I fired at the nearest, and seeing him drop to the shot, gave the other bull my left barrel. He too dropped, but before I could reload, the first one struggled to his knees, got up, and made off, but only slowly. Knowing what a nasty brute a wounded "buff" is, I let him turn away before I ran after him. In doing this I passed the second bull, lying still. The wounded one, however, was following the herd at a fair pace, but the track was easy, for there was a lot of blood. When it led into jungle I advanced cautiously, expecting a charge every minute. There was a crash in the bushes and then silence. I moved quietly on. Here was the spot; the bull had been lying down, and on hearing me had fled again. Evidently he was not a fighting sort, so I followed with less caution, but though I heard him twice afterwards I never got a sight of him.

Presently I came across something very surprising

—the impression of a boot. My first thought was that Will had come out late, but the bootmark was, I felt sure, not his, and fresh as it was, it had game tracks over it. I emerged from the jungle, and there was more light to examine the tracks. The mystery was soon revealed: the tracks were my own, and the bull had been working in a circle. What, however, was more startling was that the tracks which covered my own were those of a large leopard, which had obviously followed me. Whether it had taken me for something else, or the buffalo's blood was the attraction, I cannot say. The sun had now set, so it would be dark in a few minutes, and the buffalo was evidently not to be hoped for. So, lighting a cheroot, I shaped my course for camp not without a certain uneasy feeling. Indeed, after dark came on, I found myself turning round at the slightest sound, and lighting totally unnecessary matches to examine the compass. However, in less than three-quarters of an hour I heard the bang bang of the tracker's muzzle-loader, which Will had ordered him to fire off to guide me, and before he had had time to repeat his signal thrice, my answering shouts were heard.

Orders were given for the carts to go that way to pick up the head of the dead bull, but soon after daylight Sin 'Appu woke me to say he could not find the place. I turned out to assist, and had no difficulty in pointing out the strip of wood where I had first fired. Half an hour later Sin 'Appu came back again with the report that there was no buffalo there. So I had to go myself. I soon arrived at

the place, but rubbed my eyes in amazement. There was the very outline of the brute's form in the grass—nay, the very spot where his horn had torn the earth, but the bull was gone! I can only conclude he had been shot in the horn or skull, or, more probably, grazed in the spine, and stunned. The incident was, however, not at an end yet, for before the carts had reached the new camp there was a halt, and my servant came running back to say the buffalo was found. Sure enough the quick eye of a bullock-driver had spied the brute lying among some bushes. This was no doubt the one that I had followed so long, for he was shot rather high and far back. What was more, one hind leg was nearly all eaten. Sin 'Appu proposed that one of us should sit up for the leopard, which had obviously dined off the carcase, that night. As, however, this would involve a day's delay, we refused, whereupon he asked, and obtained, leave to do so himself.

Towards evening Will's tracker turned up, and reported that he had found a solitary elephant—"a nasty, dangerous brute," he added. The elephant had charged him, but he had dodged among the trees. Although these solitary elephants wander a great deal, we were anxious to pit ourselves against a "rogue," and decided to go in quest of him on Sin 'Appu's return. He turned up soon after daylight. The leopard had returned to his food at sunset, and Sin 'Appu, who was ensconced in the tree above the dead buffalo, put a charge of slugs into him at about five yards range. He then proceeded to skin his

victim, and loaded with the skin and the head of my bull, he, by walking nearly all night, reached camp at dawn. In spite of this he was ready for a start after the rogue before we were.

The elephant had slightly shifted his quarters, but at last the trackers hit on a pool where he had been drinking, and thence they traced out nearly all his night's wanderings. By this time we were getting a bit beat, but the freshening tracks kept us going. Presently Sin 'Appu whispered that the *hora* (rogue) had noticed us. Sure enough he had circled round several times to get our wind, and had then withdrawn, no doubt to clear fighting ground.

The trackers now advanced very cautiously, till at last they stopped, and stole back to us. They had seen the solitary. We, in our turn, crept forward and made out the head and back. It struck me that the head looked odd. The elephant was among some thick trees, and evidently quite on the alert.

We returned to our followers, and held council of war. We were in a mass of the dense thorn-jungle I have described, and could see two game paths, though which led to the present position of the elephant was doubtful. However, we decided to divide our forces. Will had the shot, and elected to follow the left-hand path while I took the right.

As I had expected, before a shot was fired, I heard a crash, and saw the elephant charge out at my friend. I heard two shots, but to my surprise the second rifle did not follow suit, and I saw the elephant

—for I could plainly see his head over the thorns—halt among the smoke. His trunk, which had been curled up out of harm's way, was down now, and I guessed he was up to mischief, so fired. With another scream he dashed on, as I knew, to turn his attentions to me. However, he surprised me after all, for though he could not come direct through the thorns, he did find a short cut, and burst out within a few yards before I had finished reloading. Sin 'Appu coolly handed me the other rifle, and took the open one, but the time was so short that I believe I must have fired both barrels at a range of less than four yards. A blow from his shoulder or forefoot sent me spinning, upsetting Sin 'Appu in my fall, but the rogue never paused. Charging through the smoke, he made off. We had just about picked ourselves up, and reloaded the rifles, when, to my joy, Will and his man appeared following up the tracks.

“What a brute!” he said. “He was on me like a shot. Before I could change rifles he had knocked us both flying, and was standing between us, feeling for me in the smoke. I was trying to reload without his hearing me when you fired. You all right?”

“Right as a trivet, bar a bruise or two. Neither bones nor spectacles broken. So let's get on, and keep together in future.” We had rather a weary tramp, though, before we saw the rogue again. Five bullets in the head—afterwards counted—had made him pretty sorry for himself. When we did get to him at last, he summoned up resolution to charge, but it was only a half-hearted attempt, for a barrel

from each of us turned him, and we followed, jubilant, at top speed. Will was the faster, and ranged up alongside. This was too much for our adversary, and he turned towards him. This gave me a chance, but blown as I was I only brought him to his knees, when Will ran in and gave the *coup-de-grâce*.

After we had sat for some time on the prostrate body of our game in order to recover our breath, we proceeded to examine him. No wonder I had thought his head presented an abnormal appearance, for his right ear was almost entirely gone, while of his left not half remained. His tail also was gone, leaving only a ridiculous excrescence, little bigger than one's fist. The trackers say that these mutilations are done by other bulls in fighting, and I am inclined to believe it, for the only other solitary elephant shot during the trip had also half his tail missing. These rogues no doubt take up a solitary existence after being driven away from their herd by other bulls, a fact which also tends to prove the mutilation is the work of a conqueror. The elephant was a very fine one; measuring as accurately as we could we made him nine feet six inches high, a result checked by the circumference of his forefoot. With the exception of one he was the largest we got that trip.

Next day we reached the Kambukenaar, and after some search found a suitable and pretty spot to encamp on. The camp was in a bend of the stream which was big enough to keep away animals on that side. Our carts were arranged across the other, so that our tents were almost completely enclosed. The stream

swarmed with fish, so that, although we were not expert anglers, we generally managed to have fish for dinner. At first we used to bathe in the stream, till Will bagged a fine alligator not a great way from camp. After this we fell back on the usual *chatty* (native water-pot).

This camp continued to be our head-quarters for over a fortnight, though on two occasions we ourselves with one cart slept a few miles away. Elephants were not forthcoming the first few days of our stay there, and our bag varied between buffalo and spotted deer; sambur were not plentiful. Sometimes we went out separately, and sometimes together.

A few days after our arrival I heard a great disturbance in camp; before I could leave the tent my boy came running up:

“Sir, sir, trackers catch one wild man.”

Sure enough between the two men was a most curious object. It was one of the *veddahs*, or aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. The manikin was not five feet high, and quite naked save a filthy rag round his waist. In his hand he carried a long bow, and some half-dozen arrows, which the servants said, and I believe truly, were poisoned. Will addressed him in Cingalese, which he spoke fluently, but got no answer. The trackers, themselves half wild, made him understand somehow, and understood him. They had found him in a tree, and with great difficulty persuaded him to come to camp. We presented him with a broken table-knife, greatly to his delight. In return for this he exhibited his skill in archery, which was not

great, and told the trackers—as much by signs as anything else—of the whereabouts of a herd of elephants.

These jungle *veddahs* are probably as low a type of humanity as exists on the face of the earth. They have no houses, no cultivation, and I believe no language. They sleep in trees, and live on the fruits of the earth and the game their arrows bring down. They are few in number, and will doubtless soon be extinct. There is another race, the village *veddahs*, probably a hybrid with the Cingalese, who do cultivate the ground and are in every way superior.

It was during our subsequent attack upon the “Veddah’s herd,” as we called them, that an incident occurred which, although it might have ended seriously, was sufficiently laughable. I, who had had the shot, had killed a nice bull after three shots, and my chum had gone off in pursuit of another. I was reloading and looking after him when I heard a warning shout from Sin ’Appu, and turning round saw an elephant so close on me that its trunk was already outstretched towards me. I just had time to spring behind a tree, and as the brute shot headlong past I saw a calf trying to follow. I did not want to injure the poor brute, but it charged myself and the tracker twice more, and each time so savagely that I thought I should have to fire. Fortunately there were plenty of trees amongst which we could dodge the infuriated mother, and at last she made off, driving her calf before her. Will soon returned, having also killed an elephant.

The next morning will be for ever marked in my



memory with regret. The trackers went out to look for game and I strolled out alone. I had not been out an hour when I made out a herd of spotted deer, and watching them from behind some bushes was a specimen of that very rare and beautiful animal, the black panther. The range was only some hundred and twenty yards, but I was so desperately anxious to get him that I decided to approach nearer. To do so I had to cross a small hollow. Just as luck would have it, two peahens ran swiftly over the brow at my approach. With sinking heart I hurried on, but as I expected deer and leopard were gone. I spent the whole morning looking for him, but of course never saw him again. To show how rare the animal is I may say that I only twice, during a seven years' residence in Ceylon, met men who had ever seen one. Of these, one had possibly seen the same specimen, as it was also near the Kambukenaar. The other man had seen his specimen in the Madras Presidency, but neither had bagged one.

I had some compensation next day. It was a very rainy morning, and I left camp late with my tracker. As we had no knowledge of game, I had one big rifle and one Express with me. We got on a ridge overlooking a large extent of jungle. The first thing I picked up with the glass was a large herd of spotted deer, but it was early in the day to rest content with those. When shortly after I made out five sambur I decided to go after them, as we had not seen many that trip. Accordingly I started off, but half-way I saw some buffaloes, and again changed my mind. Game

seemed to be on the ascending scale that day, for in less than a quarter of an hour Sin 'Appu, who rather despised all game smaller than elephants, caught me by the elbow and pointed out one of the great brutes moving out into the open. In examining the herd which followed this leader I caught sight of another elephant a great deal further off. He was apparently alone, and of great size, his colour, almost black, tending to add to his bulk. Although to attack an *alion* (solitary) single-handed and with one rifle was a bit risky, I had got confidence at the work, and determined to disregard the herd. Both the herd and the rogue were working down-wind, but the latter was a quarter of a mile behind them and quite that much further from me. I hurried on, passing close behind the herd, which dashed off on getting the wind, but the bull apparently didn't notice the noise, and plodded calmly on. I felt pretty sure he was heading for a biggish jungle not very far on, and ran on thither. When I got on the outer edge I found he was coming down a game track leading straight to the covert. This made it a certainty, and enabled me to wait at exactly the right spot. At four yards there was no excuse for a miss, and he fell stone dead to my first shot. This was undoubtedly the largest elephant shot during the trip. When we came to examine him, we found an old wound on his head. I made Sin 'Appu open it with his axe, and we came on an old belted ball of large bore, such as were commonly used for big game shooting thirty years before. It is possible the animal had carried this about all this time, but nevertheless these old weapons turn

up at times among the natives (who, however, rarely molest an elephant), and also among the planters. At all events, it had had plenty of powder behind it, for it was nearly buried in the skull, and had certainly been there some years.

Shortly afterwards we made our second short trip away from camp. The night had been wet and the jungle was soaking when we left our cart. We had not gone far when I noticed a buffalo turn up a side-track. I told Will, who was leading, and he uncased and loaded his rifle. It was lucky for him that he took this precaution, for as he arrived at the spot the bull charged out of the jungle so suddenly that it seemed to me, looking on from behind, that his rifle touched the brute before I saw the flash. At all events it was so close that the great head actually fell on Will's foot. It never moved again, for, perhaps more by luck than judgment, the bullet had crashed right through the spine, half-way between head and withers.

This was not to be the only bit of luck Will was to have that day, for as we were returning to our cart, whither the trackers had preceded us with a couple of spotted deer, an utterly unexpected event took place. An elephant burst out of some jungle to our right, and crossed the glade, going at a fair pace. Will had his 12-bore ready, and before I could realise his intention, had fired. To my surprise and astonishment the great brute rolled head over heels like a rabbit, and lay dead. Considering it was about forty yards away, and the killing circle on the side of an elephant's head is about as big as the palm of one's hand, it was a wonderful shot.

“Ghastly fluke,” remarked Will, “but I thought I mightn’t have another chance.”

Now it so happened this was the last elephant killed that trip.

Next day we were back at the old camp, and the following night we lay for the last time smoking by the light of the camp-fire by the Kambukenaar. Not that, of course, a fire is required for warmth in that climate, but it serves the triple purpose of warding off at once wild beasts, fever, and mosquitoes. There was a great charm on those nights, after a hard day, in listening to the hundred noises of the jungle. At times they would all be silenced for a minute by the scream of a leopard, or even by the deep trumpet of the lord of the jungle himself.

“Ma certie!” quoth the Scotch skipper of the *Serendib*, as our roughly-secured trophies went on board at Hambantota. This was the result of our month’s shoot, and I think it deserved his astonished commendation: Seven elephants, five buffaloes, nine spotted bucks, two sambur stags, one leopard (in addition to that killed by Sin ’Appu, the skin of which he presented to me), one alligator—total, twenty-five head of big game, besides pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, and other birds.

CHAPTER XV.

A CHRISTMAS WEEK IN HAMPSHIRE.

HAMPSHIRE, from a hunting point of view, is rather a weak brief to take up, some people will say. Well, perhaps it is; but in common honesty I have to admit that I have some enjoyable recollections of that county of ploughs, hops, and woodlands. I had better say at once that of the greatest Hampshire woodland of all, the New Forest, I do not propose to speak in this paper, but rather to see if I can recall some pleasant days in the open.

Passing by my first season in Hampshire—a short one, and one of the worst on record everywhere—I come at once to the second, which was five years later. As before, Aldershot was my head-quarters. This, probably, is about the very worst centre for Hampshire hunting—especially for those who do not use the train.

Christmas week, however, afforded some decent sport. It began really on the Saturday before. On that day the H. H., meeting at the Golden Pot, found a fox at Shaddon a few minutes before one. Of course, he wanted to make for Weston Common—that bugbear of hunting in north-east Hampshire.

However, for once the combined vocal efforts of the field succeeded in driving our fox from his point, and exactly at the hour he broke over Blounce Farm. At first hounds were able to drive him at a good pace, but the further we went the worse things seemed to get.

Fencing, of course, in that country there was little or none, but to hound lovers the run was of some interest. Patiently the huntsman and hounds worked out the line, till at last, just as I was beginning to think it was all U P, the huntsman got a view a few fields on, and capped the pack on to it. This changed the aspect of affairs altogether, and at eight minutes past two hounds pulled their fox down in a hedgerow close to Crondall. This was very convenient for the Aldershot party, who mostly went home.

The following Wednesday was Boxing Day, and a cheerful holiday crowd had assembled to meet the Chiddingfold at the lofty elevation of Hindhead, where, and in the neighbouring district of Haslemere, I believe, nowadays, a colony of cockneyfied villas has sprung up.

There cannot be many prettier spots in England for foot-people to see drawn by hounds than the Punchbowl at Hindhead, and this Boxing Day they were clustered in hundreds round its upper acclivities, while hounds worked their way through the gorse and heather below. It reminded one more of Exmoor hunting than anything else.

Ere long a fox was on foot and broke away to the

eastward. At first hounds were rather inclined to string one after another through the high growth, but presently the going became better for them, and the foot-people saw the last of us. For half an hour they ran fast, and by that time they had got into the big woodlands, where an awkward turn or two threw out the bulk of the field. The second half-hour was a good deal slower, but hounds stuck to their fox well, and finally pulled him down near the Round House exactly one hour after the find.

It was not long before we found again in these woodlands, but the line hounds picked up was evidently that of a fox who had been disturbed by them when running their first. He was too far ahead, and we had to give it up.

After some time we found again, at Wormley Hill this time, and had a capital thirty-five minutes to Broadwater, where we unfortunately changed foxes, so I went home.

Next day, the 27th, the Ripley and Knaphill Harriers were at Rickford Mill. By the way, this is perhaps rather Surrey than Hants, but it is all on the border. Mr. Dubourg had a deer for us—and one of the right sort. Hounds went away a cracker for Guildford. Right through the railway station they ran and down to the River Wey—we clattering through the streets to the delight of the inhabitants of the pretty old town. I recollect I got down to the river bank by negotiating one of the most awkward obstacles I ever jumped—a flight of rails built across a low railway arch. Fortunately, I was riding

about the best timber-jumper I ever owned, and she popped through without banging my head against the top of the arch.

There was the deer—at soil in the flooded Wey, the hounds baying on the bank. However, presently he was obliging enough to break his bay, for it would have been impossible to reach him, and on he went by Shalford Church, and lay up in a little wood beyond. Hounds were stopped and the whip sent to eject him.

He evidently took the crack of the whip which he received as an intimation to put his best foot foremost, for he took us at a rare pace to Chilworth, and then turned up over the downs to Merrow.

I don't think I ever saw hounds run faster than they did here. Without a fence of any kind to stop us, the little beauties (foxhound bitches, by the way) ran clean away from us all on the open downs. But we soon overtook them puzzling out the line in some fir coverts above Merrow. From Merrow Village the deer ran on to Clandon Station, following roughly the line of the (then) New Railway. This part of the run was rather woodland and a good deal slower. Finally, we took our deer in the outhouse to a keeper's cottage at Clandon Common.

Next day the Chiddingfold were at Puttenham. They found at Pepperharrow, and ran for an hour and a quarter in those great woodlands till the fox got to ground, when feeling an attack of my old enemy, the gout, coming on, I left them.

In spite of my having passed a sleepless night, the

morning of Saturday, the 29th, saw me in the saddle again early, for I had a long jog before me to meet the H. H. at Sutton Common.

Winnie Copse, as usual, was good for a fox, and, equally as usual, our fox made for Weston Common and thence to Froyle Park, where he beat them. About this period the gout beat me too, although I had only one boot and one gaiter on, and reluctantly enough I turned my horse's head for home.

Now, have I not made out some case for North Hants? Here in a week, or rather eight days, I hunted five, and if I had had leisure (and horses) could have hunted one more, the other two being Sunday and Christmas Day. Of these five days the first showed us a fair hunting run; the second, two nice gallops; and the third plenty of fun, although I will not pretend to rank the chase of the carted deer very high among field sports. As for the last two, but for my physical disablement, my diary might chronicle better sport on those, for on each occasion I can only speak to the doings with the morning fox.

The frost came with the New Year, and I only got three days at its conclusion before my route came and moved me on to

“ Fresh woods and pastures new.”

Except in the New Forest, I have not hunted in Hampshire since.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER.

PROBABLY there is no date in the whole year which is looked forward to by so large a number of English gunners of every class as the first of September. It is only a small number of us who own, or are invited to, grouse moors in Scotland or Yorkshire, and, unless local circumstances are favourable to water-fowl and provide us with duck-shooting, the probability is that the last days of August find us eagerly waiting for our first chance of "killing something."

Not that "the First" is quite the day it used to be in our fathers' time. If we turn to that delightful book, "Harry Coverdale's Courtship," we find the hero getting up so as to start at five o'clock on that eventful morning, and remaining absent all day, only returning after dark to display his bag. It is doubtful if any sportsmen are now to be found at work at daylight on the First. I certainly never was, though I have been twice out shooting in England at daylight. The first time was to skim the cream of the duck-shooting on an unreserved lake. Unfortunately the sun rose, or rather did not rise, in a thick mist, and when that cleared away there were no less than twelve

boats, the crews of which were waiting to commence operations. It was a great wonder nothing *larger* than duck was bagged that morning. The second time was also a "first," but that of October, and our object in being up betimes was to shoot along the edge of a Royal preserve, where the keepers had the bad habit of running dogs along the outside every morning to drive in any pheasants that might have wandered over the boundary. As our shooting was only on War Department lands we could not object, but in the way I have narrated we circumvented the Royal keepers, and a very pretty little bag of long-tails we had accumulated by the time the gold-laced "velveteens" appeared on the scene. If things were habitually managed in the old days as the books tell us, we can only say how great a change has come over the spirit of partridge-shooting.

Now we read the reports of the shooting in the papers of the 2nd September, and they mostly run: "Not much shooting has been done in this district owing to the large quantity of corn still standing," or, "Only a few sportsmen were out yesterday in this neighbourhood, and they report that many of the coveys are still small and weak." Nevertheless, there are few sportsmen who do not kill a few brace of the little brown birds on the opening day, and that for the reason I have given above—*i.e.*, that it is the first shooting that many of us get in the year.

It is almost unnecessary for me to say that the methods employed for circumventing the bird in question are now mostly different from those employed

by Harry Coverdale and his contemporaries. The universal abandonment of the sickle struck the first great blow to the use of dogs for partridge-shooting, and whereas in old days the partridge and the stubble field are always connected together, it is now generally only necessary to open the gate of such a field to see the last covey topping the fence at the other end. Root crops still afford the necessary cover, and there are many districts where inferior farming and the nature of the country afford such natural cover as will ensure the birds lying to the dog. Dogs are certainly more employed in this sport, and in woodcock and snipe-shooting, than in any other form of British sport with the gun. One reason is that when, as often happens, the corn is not cut, driving is not practicable till long after the First. Game is, however, wanted for the table, and without a dog a lot of walking and poking about in odd corners is necessary to put together a few brace of birds.

There is, however, one form of partridge-shooting to which I shall only refer to reprobate it. I mean that where beaters are employed in the morning to drive dozens of coveys into one or two large turnip fields, ready for the lazy gunners to walk them up and slay them at their leisure. This system combines all the drawbacks attaching to driving with all those connected with shooting over dogs. That is to say, it neither provides healthy exercise for the sportsman, nor does it afford any difficulty in the shooting. Therefore it is indefensible from both points of view.

Partridge-shooting, like snipe-shooting, is essentially a poor man's sport. Unless it be in the Eastern Counties, there are few places in England where a good shot cannot count on getting some days every September, and, perhaps, better still, the right of shooting over some unreserved ground. When a boy I was very fortunate in this respect. The district in which I lived was almost wholly unreserved, or only nominally preserved. A kind neighbour, the Duke of —, gave my father permission for me to shoot such a large extent of ground, that I could walk four or five miles on end without going off it. How I used to revel in the permission! Breakfast over, my lunch was thrust into my game-bag, dogs let loose, and I was rapidly mounting the six hundred feet of hill that rose steeply behind the house. The ground over which I had permission to shoot afforded every facility for rough shooting. Much of it was heather-covered moor, much woodland of various ages; there were some small and not too well-cultivated farms; and there was a snipe-bog. Over this I would wander all day, enjoying equally the pure air of the hills and the surprises of the sport, for there was not enough game for my bag to be a matter of certainty. Still, there was game, and my game-bag generally contained some half-a-dozen head when I returned home at night. Partridges, snipe, rabbits, hares, and later in the year, pheasants and woodcock made up the bag, which, however, was not often heavy enough to inconvenience me in the carrying it. One day, I re-

collect, I shot three hares, which were by no means common in the neighbourhood, and on that occasion I was heartily sick of my load before I got home.

This is the kind of partridge-shooting of which most shooting Englishmen have some recollection, and it is the shooting of which most men whose business lies in the country get some share. The doctor, the parson, the lawyer, and even the banker, get a few days in the course of the year, and not a few farmers, whose landlords do not shoot, are addicted to it, not always, I fancy, taking out a game certificate. But in these days of short-time licenses there is little excuse for that. If a man is only to get a few days' shooting in the year, considering that he will rarely return without at least a brace of birds in his dog-cart, his three-guinea license will soon pay itself. As to the gun license, I think it should be abolished; it only opens a door to defrauding the revenue and to poaching. Farmers killing ground game should be allowed to do so untaxed, and all others should be obliged to pay for a game certificate.

But these remarks are beyond the scope of this chapter. Whether the head of game is large or small, the pleasure of taking down one's gun for the first time in the season is equally great, so is that of sallying forth into the clear autumn air with one or two old comrades, and perhaps the dogs over whom we have killed so many birds.

"Well, keeper, here is a lovely 'First.' Where had we better begin?"

"I was thinking, sir, that as Giles has got his corn

cut, we might walk down the stubble to the big root field."

Soon we are at the stubble, the dogs are taken up, and we walk quietly down. A hare, who had her form in that dry rut, bounces up, only to roll over, scientifically killed. At the shot a covey rises a little wild, but my old friend on the right has an "unerring tube," and down go a brace. The covey drop in the root field, where shortly after we get well among, and pretty nearly exterminate, them. So the day goes on and the sun gets hotter, till at last somebody says in a tone of some relief, "There's the boy with the lunch." Seated in the shade of yon high hedge, we do ample justice to the good things put before us. Some food gives place to tobacco and "just one glass of sherry," while the remains of lunch afford ample occupation for the jaws of the keeper and his assistants. It is pleasant here in the shade, where the busy bumble-bee comes droning along, and conversation gradually lags till at last some one says, jumping up, "Isn't it time we went on again?" You start, half doubtful whether you really have or have not been dozing, and perhaps the shooting after lunch is not quite equal to what it was this morning. But the birds lie well this hot afternoon, and the shooting improves, till evening draws on, and you tramp home quite satisfied with your day's work. Then after your comfortable dinner, when the cigar-smoke rises up, and the "gray hen" is tapped, you kill your birds over again. For you the eternal question of "driving or no driving" is settled for once, and you all agree that no method of partridge-

shooting can be equal to that which you have been enjoying this first of September.

* * * * *

The English partridge (not that this bird is, like the grouse, peculiar to the British Isles) is the only one which can be satisfactorily walked up or worked with dogs. The red-legged variety, or "Frenchman," which is unfortunately increasing greatly in England to the detriment of the old British bird, is equally unfavourably known by its persistent habit of running, and by its want of flavour when on the table. Of course, for driving, the former fault does not matter. I have shot other varieties of partridges in many lands, but all shared these two defects. In India there are many kinds of partridge, from the magnificent black partridge to the common gray bird (not unlike our British one), which many people will not eat because they accuse it of being a scavenger. The only way to get foreign partridge on the wing is to walk steadily after them till they pass a large bush, a rock, or other *accident de terrain*. Then by running rapidly round it—the opposite way to that the birds have gone—you will inevitably meet them at the other side, and they will be sure to rise.

* * * * *

Smith and I were down on Exmoor for stag-hunting, but we found the time hang rather heavy on our hands on off-days. So we began to make inquiries as to shooting. The landlord of the little inn we were staying at told us he thought he knew of some we

could hire, and on inquiry we were offered it for the sum of five pounds. With this we were advised to close, and rightly so, for I am sure we had a good deal more than that value of game off it, without taking the sport into consideration at all.

Accordingly, we took out our licenses and made our preparations for a start on the First. Our landlord volunteered to come with us and show us the boundaries—an offer we accepted only on condition he should bring his gun, for, though a very stout man, he was a keen shot. The start was made rather later than I could have wished, but we had not many miles to drive. For dogs we had our host's Irish setter—not a bad dog, if a little wild—and a spaniel, the use of which on the first of September I could not quite understand. Our road followed a deep valley, that of the Exe, I fancy, and then breasting a steep hill we emerged on a plateau considerably above the stream, and pulled up at the field-gate of a rough moor. The dogs were taken up and we advanced in line. Not far on we reached a lot of old heather with obvious marks of the presence of black game. A young cock rose to the right, and our host got on him with his second barrel and killed him. At the sound of the shot several old black-cocks rose a long way ahead and made off. I may here remark that although during the next fortnight we had a very fair bag of gray hens and young birds off this moor, we never got a shot at an old black-cock. In vain did we attempt to stalk and drive—they were much too wary for us. The preponderance of cocks on

Exmoor is gradually extirpating the black game, and under our game laws there is no remedy. In some parts of the forest they simply swarm ; I have counted thirty close together, when driving in a dog-cart. Had I been on foot I should not have got so near them. As they cannot be driven, it is but rarely that they fall to the gun. A large local proprietor made up a shooting-party and told his guests that cock birds only were to be shot at. They bagged *three*, though they saw scores.

No doubt it is this cause that has so nearly exterminated the black game in the New Forest, and quite in many other parts of England. Gilbert White speaks of them as not quite extinct in Wolmer Forest in his day. I am pretty sure there are none there now. Not very many years ago I noticed some black game rise in front of a squadron of cavalry during an August field-day on the Fox Hills near Aldershot. As this ground is free shooting for the Division from the first of September, I made my way there early on the morning of that day and bagged two or three brace. I dare say they are extinct there now. When a boy I have spoken with men by no means aged, who had in their youth frequently shot them on the hills bordering the Wye Valley in Monmouthshire. They are now as extinct there as the wolf.

This, I think, is another point on which German sportsmen can give us a wrinkle. Their game laws prohibit the killing of gray hens entirely where it is considered necessary — for instance, in the Grand Duchy of Baden. On the other hand, the only close

time for black-cocks is from the first of June to the sixteenth of August. In the spring the black-cock can easily be approached, for they are so taken up with their ridiculous performances of drumming and dancing, that they fall an easy prey to the gun. The balance between the sexes is thus easily kept up in this way. In England, on the contrary, dozens of cocks worry and harass each hen, with the not infrequent result that she never succeeds in hatching out a brood at all.

To return, however, to our "First." As we came over the bank where the little moor ran steeply down to the valley we came upon another lot of birds, which yielded us four more, but all hens or young cocks. Then we turned round and took a beat back. To my surprise some flappers got up, and I bagged two, wondering at their presence so far from water. I learnt afterwards that the wild duck breeds in the dry heather, and that these young birds are especially valued for the table, as their food, consisting almost entirely of "oerts,"* gives them a peculiarly delicate flavour.

At last the little moor was worked out; now I was to see the use of the spaniel. Facing the moor were a number of meadows, the fences of which, like nearly all Exmoor ones, consisted of banks about five feet high, topped with thick beech hedges. Our host sent a gun on each side.

"Up on the 'edge, Clo," commanded the spaniel's

* Oerts is the Devonshire name for the bilberry, also called whinberry and whortleberry.

owner, and not without difficulty she forced her way through the beech bushes. In this way we worked all the fences, getting one or two more black game and a rabbit or two. Once a cock pheasant flew up temptingly, but his time was not yet.

Just as we decided to knock off for lunch, the red setter pointed in some long grass and thistles. Going to him we grassed the first partridges of the season. The covey scattered, and I marked two which alighted in some thorny scrub on a steep bankside which bordered a wheatfield. S——, who was always a bit inclined to shirk, declined the climb, so I went alone, and was rewarded by getting both.

We sat down to lunch beside a rippling stream. The sun was hot, and we did full justice to our host's cider, which was excellent. Besides partridge, ducks, and rabbits, we had bagged four and a half brace of black game.

The bag, of course, was laid out for examination, and we were greatly pleased with the black game, for these birds in the south are as forward at this season as they would be in the Highlands in late October. They were very different from the little things I had seen killed on Scottish moors in the third week of August.

After lunch our beat was along the two very steep sides of the little valley, and over the left-hand hill-top. The fields were small here, but they held a fair number of coveys of partridges, of which we took heavy toll. As they got a bit wilder, they began to get up as we were climbing the high banks that divided the

fields. This we managed to counteract by one of us remaining ready to shoot, whilst the other climbed, and on the whole did pretty well.

Almost at the end of the beat was the farmhouse, and just as I was remarking that there was no object in going any nearer, a hare jumped up, and took the contents of my two barrels away rejoicing. Just as I was beginning to take credit to myself for a very bad miss, she suddenly turned in a short circle and made so directly for Smith as almost to run between his legs. I was sorry when he rolled her over, as it would have been interesting to watch her subsequent action. She was probably shot in the head or heart, and her running on was equivalent to the act of "towering" in a bird. The three shots brought out the farmer, who gave us a hearty welcome, and walked on with us. Seeing us turn aside to skirt a bit of standing corn, he cried :

"Put the dogs into it, sir, put the dogs into it. They won't do it no hurt, nor you either. Walk on, gentlemen, walk on."

We did so. The crop was certainly rather poor-looking oats, but the action was a kindly one, such as I have often and often had to thank the British farmer for. As it happened there was a covey in the oats, of which we took toll, and also a brace of pheasants. The farmer called to us to shoot these too, but of course we did not.

"Ah," he said, "you should have shot 'un. You'm never see 'un agin." But we did, though—or rather perhaps we may have done—for when their due season came we killed some pheasants on that ground. Time

was getting on now, and we shot our way down to the stream, by a ford of which the dog-cart was waiting, and laid out our bag. This was the total—four and a half brace black game, eight brace partridges, one couple wild duck, five rabbits, and a hare ; total, thirty-three head, a result with which we were more than pleased. The black game especially gave an unusual variety to the bag, and altogether I hope to be able some day to try that ground again on the same anniversary.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHARK-SHOOTING IN THE MAURITIUS.

SOME dozen years ago fate landed me in Port Louis, the capital and port of the Island of Mauritius. I was strolling along through the streets when a cheery voice hailed me.

“Rather different to the Grande Rue de Pera,” it said. I turned round and there was an old acquaintance, R——, of the —— Highlanders. We had last foregathered at Constantinople what time the “clouds in the East,” which resulted in the Russo-Turkish war, were gathering blackly on the political horizon.

“Why, R——, what are you doing here?” I cried.

“My good fellow, I am the Robinson of the island.

“My right there is none to dispute,
From the centre right down to the sea
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.

In plain English, I am the commandant of Port Louis. My detachment consists of a few sickly Scotchmen and three British subalterns, of whom one is at the sanatorium at Curepipe, while the other two take it in turns to do duty and lie in bed with the local fever.”

“Don’t you get fever, then?”

“Of course I don’t. I am always about. The planters give me lots of deer-shooting, and there are some duck at the back of the island. But what are *you* doing here?”

“Faith, I hardly know; you must ask the skipper of the good ship lying in the harbour there. A fortnight ago I had no idea I should ever see this place, and now it appears I am in for a considerable stay here.”

“Well, we must try and make the stay agreeable. I think I can promise you a day’s deer-shooting, and to-morrow we will try the sharks. Come along, now, and have some lunch.”

Shark-shooting, as I learnt now, was R——’s invention, and he had carried it to rare perfection. He had killed, so he told me, over a hundred of these pests of the sea, but the supply was apparently inexhaustible. His usual method I shall describe presently, but it was sometimes varied. “Some little time ago,” said he, “a cattle-ship arrived from Madagascar, and there was a dead bullock on board. I begged the body and had it moored near the Bell Buoy outside the harbour. Then half-a-dozen of us went off in a boat, and standing on the platform round the buoy, fired regular volleys into the sharks which had collected in large numbers. Their blood attracted others, and in an hour the scene beggared description. The water was churned up into blood-stained foam, in the midst of which the black fins sailed to and fro. Besides those we picked up, we must have killed a dozen

which were torn to pieces by their brethren." This incident was illustrated and described in *The Graphic* at the time. Meanwhile we had arrived at R——'s bungalow, which was decorated with sharks' jaws.

"This is my best pair," he said, picking them up and passing them over my head. The circumference was large enough to allow them to pass freely over my shoulders. I shuddered. R—— called his orderly and told him to have a dozen *chiens marrons* ready in the morning. These are the common pariah dogs of the East, which go by this name in this semi-French colony.

Accordingly next morning after breakfast we embarked in a shore boat, taking with us our lunch and the half-dozen wretched dogs which were destined to be "butchered to make a Mauritian holiday." We pulled out of the harbour past the Bell Buoy, and finally reaching the lightship some couple of miles to seaward, we went on board. We were warmly welcomed by the light-keeper and his assistant, whom R—— pointed out to me as the "black harpooner." He was a negro of herculean proportions. Our preparations were soon made. They consisted in tying the wretched dogs in two lots of three, each lot being fastened to a long line. They were tossed overboard, and floating under the ship's counter, were put out of their misery by a ball through the head. This was rather a butcherly business, but the bloodshed was necessary to attract the sharks. Up to the present we had not seen the sign of one. The lines

were paid out till the baits were floating many yards from the ship, and we sat down to wait.

In about twenty minutes a black fin appeared moving to and fro near one bait, but rather shyly. The harpooner, who had brought his weapon, the beam of which was a huge pole, commenced by pulling in the second bait. Then the other was drawn in very slowly, the shark following. At last it was right under the counter. The shark seemed unwillingly to close with it and we began to think we must fire. At last he made up his mind, and dashing in, turned up his white belly to seize the bait.

At that moment the black raised his harpoon, drawing up his figure to its height. He looked like a statue in ebony. The harpoon sped true, and R—— and I emptied our rifles into the shark, which plunged violently and made off, taking out yards of the line. The lightship man, harpooner, and our boatmen all "tailed on" to the rope, but still they had to give ground. Meanwhile R—— and I fired whenever we could get a clear shot. At last the struggles got weaker, and the line began to come in foot by foot. When the shark was right under the counter a couple of bullets in the head finished him. A noose was thrown over his tail, and he was drawn up to the gangway. He was between eight and nine feet long. The harpooner cut out his weapon, the baits were let out again, and we sat down to lunch.

The view from the lightship is very fine, the mountains all around being of the most rugged and curious shapes, while highest of all rises the extra-

ordinary "Pieter Bot," shaped like a gigantic spear-head. Strange to say it has been repeatedly ascended, though it is necessary to put up some sort of scaffolding to surmount the part which overhangs. To the left of St. Louis we could see the lovely gardens of Pamplemousse, which, as far as I recollect, contain the tomb of Paul and Virginia. At all events it is near there. What a pity it seems such a lovely island should be such a hotbed of fever, which, by the way, has been introduced within the memory of man. When we had finished lunch, several more of the black fins were in sight, cruising to and fro. Several times the baits were hauled in, but the sharks refused to come within harpooning distance.

"The brutes are getting shy, I think," said R——.

"Well, sir, you've given them a pretty good dressing, I think," said the light-keeper.

It was obvious we should not get another chance of harpooning, so we opened fire at about fifty yards. The blood of the sharks we hit attracted more, and no doubt several were killed, although we were unable to pick any up afterwards.

On our way back, R—— apologised for the badness of the sport.

"Not at all," I said, "I have enjoyed it immensely. I never shot a shark before in my life, and I have always hated the brutes. I shall be able to say I have taken part in *the* distinctive sport of Mauritius."

"This is my own particular invention," said R——; "nobody ever heard of it before, and they laugh at me now, and chaff me about the *réquins*."

The distinctive sport is the *chasses*, or deer drives, but it will be hard lines if I don't manage to show you one of those too before you go."

I must say I thought R——'s invention was worthy of imitation, and if our soldiers and sailors in tropical stations who find time hang heavy on their hands were only to try their hands at it, the number of these sea pests might be substantially reduced. Yet even sharks have their uses, I suppose, as the father of one of my friends once found out. Wishing to bathe in a Ceylon river, he asked a native to show him a place where there were no alligators. The native took him to a pool close to the estuary. After his dip, and when he was drying himself, the European asked his guide why there were never any alligators in that pool.

"Because, sar," replied the Cingalese, "plenty 'fraid of sharks."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUNTING IN INDIA.

I.—THE QUARRY.

“IN India,” said the immortal Mr. Jorrocks, “they hunt the jackall (*sic*)—not at all a sportin’ animal, I should say, from the specimen in the Zoologicals.” *

In spite of the denunciation of so great a sporting authority, I venture to enter a plea for the jackal as a beast of chase. Moreover, as Surtees’ immortal work was published half a century ago the above quotation proves that even then our Anglo-Indian predecessors made the jackal take the place of Reynard of the land of their birth. To this day the existence of the Bombay Hunt, the Poona Hounds, and other regular packs in the East, prove that the “jack” is considered his not altogether unworthy representative.

Not that it must be supposed that there are no foxes in India. Two varieties of the species divide the Indian peninsula. To the south it is the Indian fox who holds sway, while, commencing on the northern borders of Central India, the desert fox replaces him in Scinde, the Punjaub, and the North-West. In Ceylon, which I propose to include in my chapter, though for brevity I have not done so in its

* “Handley Cross,” chap. vii., p. 67, original edition.

title, there are no foxes. To the superficial observer the above-named two sorts of foxes appear almost similar. Both are very small, their bodies being about the size of a large English rabbit. Both are light gray in colour, with large ears and fine bushy "brushes," that of the desert variety having a large white "tag." Both are exceedingly swift. There are two reasons why they are unsuitable for hunting. In the first place, although they do not quite imitate the unsportsmanlike precedent of the Indian hare in popping into the very first hole they come to, they are rarely found far from their own earths or those of their brethren, into which they soon disappear. The second reason is, however, still worse. Whatever the reason, Indian foxes leave absolutely no scent. I have seen foxhounds find one in a tiny covert, and get away right on his brush, only to lose him directly a swell of ground hid him from view. I may say that when one handles them there is no foxy odour perceptible. Still, remembering what a tremendous scent the red deer and other "sweet-scented beasts of chace" leave, one hesitates to accept this as the reason.

The jackal has neither of these disadvantages. At least he does not go to ground nearly as often as an English fox; and the scent he leaves is as good as climatic conditions and the nature of the ground will admit. So well-known an animal requires little description. Suffice it to say that he is rather larger than a fox, with much longer legs and a much shorter brush. In colour he is a yellowish gray, the fur in

winter being exceedingly beautiful. I have killed them with hair five inches long about the shoulders. About one in ten thousand has a "horn," that is to say the frontal bone projects to such an extent that the skin forms a callous projection between, and rather above, the eyes. The natives attach many fabulous properties to these "horns," and value them accordingly. I have only seen one in my life.

A jackal is for one reason an exasperating and a difficult beast to hunt. This is that he never seems to know his own mind about where he is going. Consequently, the Indian huntsman has nothing whatever to guide him in making a cast. Given a check in England, unless the fox has obviously been headed, the line is, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, "on." In my Indian experience I only twice knew a jackal to be headed, but I have frequently known one in the middle of a run turn off at right angles for no reason at all. In England, again, a fox makes for a certain "point," which is, or should be, known to the huntsman. A jackal, unless found near rocky hills—for which he invariably makes—has no point, and seems to wander aimlessly on till he is either killed or lost.

I now come to the hares. The Indian hare (*L. ruficaudatus*) may be summed up in very few words. It is useless for hunting, equally so for coursing, and not worth eating. It is not want of scent which renders it useless for hunting, for the scent is strong, and foxhounds are very apt to run riot on it. What renders it useless for hunting, and nearly so for coursing, is its propensity for going

to ground. It never loses any opportunity of doing this, and, as the plains of India are covered with holes in all directions, it does not lack opportunity, and usually goes to ground in the first hundred yards. Tommy Atkins, who is addicted to whippets and similar lurchers, invariably digs her out on these occasions, and thus secures half-a-dozen hares on most of his "hunting days." I may here remark that I have known our English hare go to ground when pressed. On the 2nd October, 1888, I saw this happen with the Quarme Harriers in Devonshire. In England, however, it is at least as rare as a fox taking to a tree, whereas in India it is the rule.

The Ceylon hare (*L. nigricollis*), on the contrary, never goes to ground. Though not possessing the speed or the stoutness of the European variety, it makes a good fight for its life before a pack of harriers. This hare, undoubtedly, is a scavenger, and I am inclined to suspect the Indian hare of the same habit. Indeed, I am doubtful if any species of hare can claim entire acquittal on this charge. The Mosaic law is otherwise justified with regard to prohibited flesh—therefore should we suppose that *one* animal only, which is really a clean feeder, appears on the black list?

With regard to the deer tribe, I have no experience of the hunting of any of them with hounds in India, but in Ceylon the *sambur*, there known as the elk, is regularly hunted with foxhounds. With this exception the only deer I have seen hunted is the *muntjac*, known in Ceylon as the red deer. When

hunted, their run is very similar to that of a roe-deer, and they rarely leave the covert.

The sambur is larger than the Exmoor red deer, and chocolate-brown in colour. The horns, which carry six points, are much finer in the Indian stags than those of Ceylon. It would, I think, be possible to hunt them in some parts of India, but as a rule it is not done. In fact I never heard of such a thing, but it may be done in the Madras Presidency.

II.—HUNTING WITH GREYHOUNDS IN THE INDIAN PLAINS.

In writing the heading of this chapter I have purposely avoided the use of the word "coursing," because I consider the word cannot properly be taken to mean the pursuit of the fox. A second reason for my doing so consists in the fact that of coursing proper I know nothing, for I have never seen greyhounds at work in England. This may seem a strange confession for an Englishman devoted to sport to make, but the leash never had any charms for me. Trotting along the boundless plains, with a couple of hounds running by one's side, and ready for any four-footed animal which might appear, is, to my mind, quite a different class of amusement. In English coursing, judging from written descriptions, the judge must be the only man who really gets any fun. Mr. Jorrocks can hardly have ever acted in that capacity, or else his famous stricture on the sport: "Now, of all the slow, starvation, great-coat, comforter, worsted-stockin', dirty-nose sorts of amusement, that

same melancholy coursin' is to me the most miserably contemptible,"* would have remained unspoken.

When, many years ago, I first went out to India, I landed at the end of winter, and was promptly ordered to a station as nearly as possible in the middle of the great peninsula. By the advice of an old *qui-hi*, I had taken out a couple of English greyhounds, of good pedigree, which he assured me I should find better for the liver than medicine. My hounds had borne the voyage well, and arrived at my new home in good condition, owing to my great care on their journey up-country, which was both long and hot.

Arrived at my station and settled down, I was naturally desirous of trying them, and accordingly one hot April morning I had my horse saddled, and soon after five o'clock I started for some barren undulating country a mile or two from my bungalow.

For some time I saw nothing. At last a hare jumped up. The greyhounds, of the best blood in England, soon raced up to her, but after a turn or two she suddenly disappeared! When I arrived at the spot I found the dogs looking as astonished as myself over an open hole. I confess I was quite unprepared for this unsportsmanlike manœuvre, which soon became familiar to me.

Before long I viewed a fox. The Indian foxes, as I have said before, are exceedingly swift. Consequently they generally give a good run, and in the hot weather not infrequently beat good greyhounds, who

* "Handley Cross," chap. xxix., p. 221.

become so distressed by thirst and exhaustion as to give up the chase. On this occasion the ground was soft and sandy, and consequently favourable to the hounds. Greyhounds suffer fearfully from the stony ground in India. I have often seen their claws cut nearly off. This time they soon turned and re-turned the fox, and wound up by running alongside of him, snapping at him but not daring to seize the unaccustomed quarry in spite of my encouragement. Finally the fox made for a rocky hillock covered with cactus bushes, unsighted them, and got to ground. This was provoking, and I did not find again.

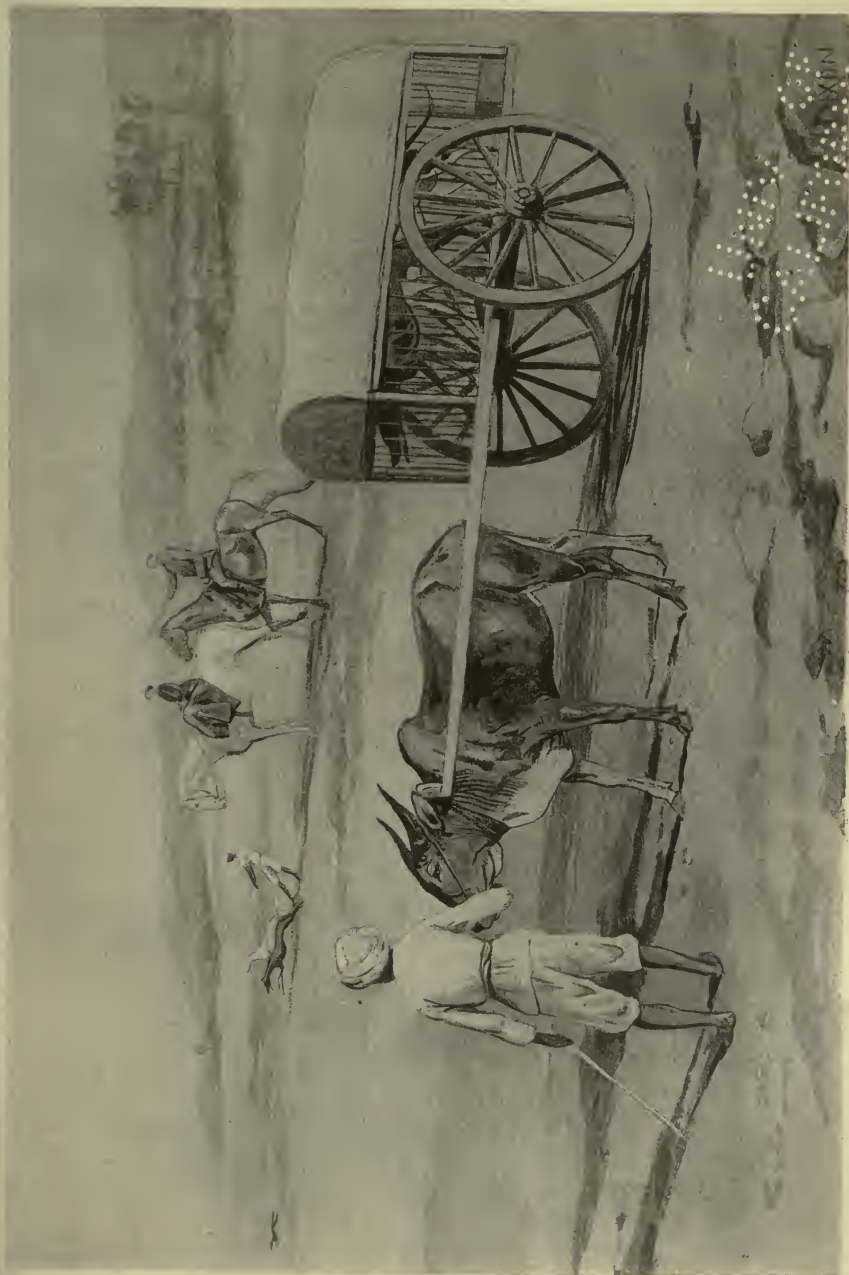
Two days afterwards, having ascertained that jackals frequented a rocky hill not very far from my house, I went out to see if I could try to induce them to tackle this quarry. I took a couple of coolies with me, and posting myself with the dogs on one side of the hill, sent them to beat it from the other. Complete success crowned this manœuvre, for two jackals broke close to me. I cheered on the dogs, who speedily raced up to a "jack" but refused to close with him. The brute showed fight, snarling and snapping at the greyhounds, and waited till I was close to him, when he made off. This time the dogs would not even follow. Completely disheartened, I returned home, and the same result occurred the next day and each time I went out. I began to think my coursing would never come to any good, when by good luck I heard of two greyhounds, crossed with the native Rampore breed, which were warranted to tackle anything. I wrote to say I would buy them, and my offer

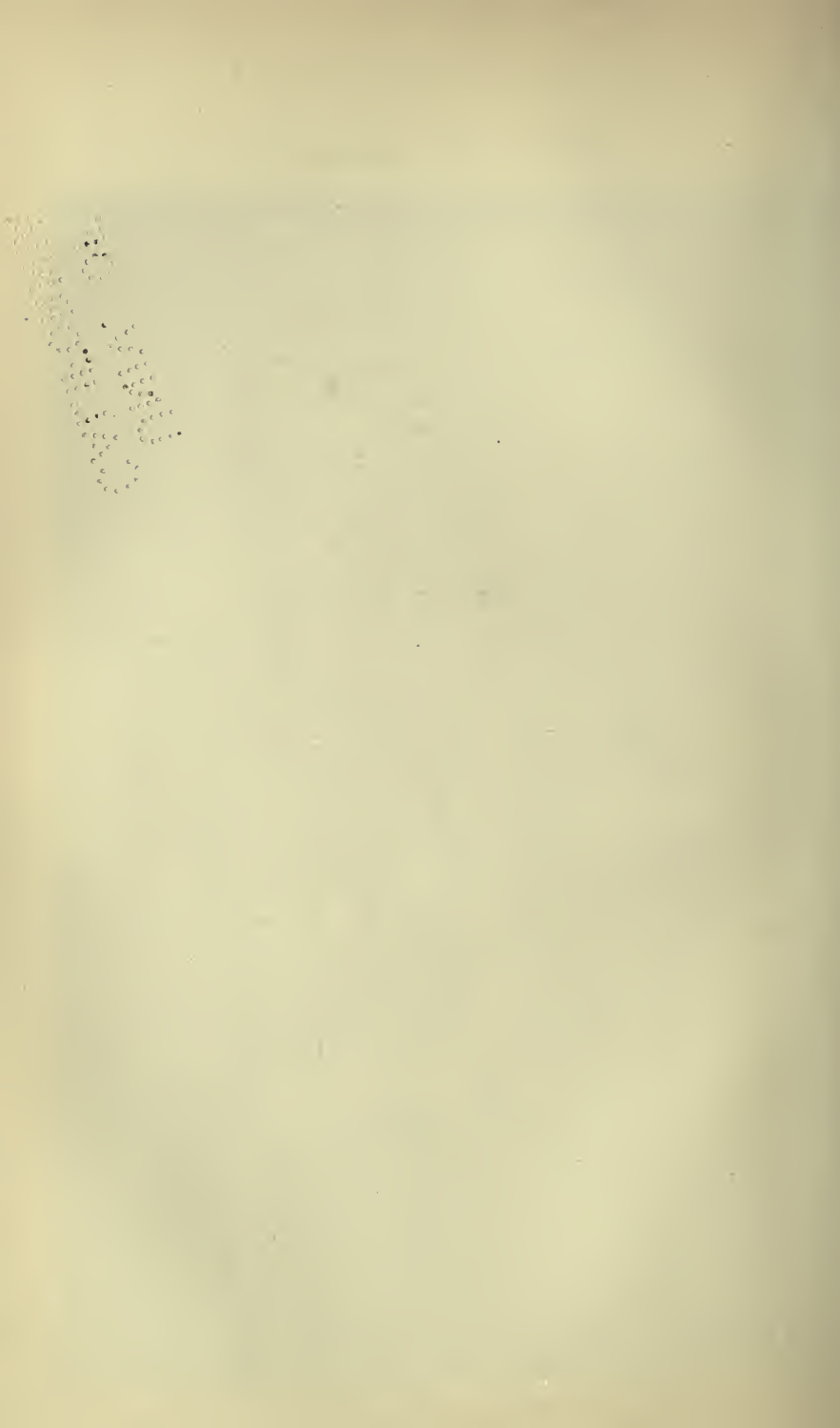
being accepted, I sent a man to Allahabad to fetch them.

Meanwhile I had been considering the question of how greyhounds ought really to be managed during the Indian summer. I had already discovered that it was no good expecting dogs to be equal to the efforts that might reasonably be expected from them in England; in fact, that it was necessary to convey them to and from the ground. Even then they soon tired. So I set to work to design a coursing van, of which, as I afterwards used a similar one for foxhounds, I subjoin a description.

I first got a pair of wheels, which were strong enough to stand the bumping over rocks and nullahs. On these I got a native carpenter to put a flat flooring and a pair of shafts. At each corner of the floor an upright, some eighteen inches high, was erected, and these were connected, except behind, by stout rails. These rails were pierced every few inches, and through each hole an iron pin was driven which also entered the flooring. Over this sort of cot on wheels rose an arched roof of a peculiar native thatch, covered with white cloth. A tail-board fitted in behind, and white curtains, which could be lowered at the front, back, and sides, to exclude the sun, were provided. It could easily be drawn by a pony or by one of the little native bullocks, which I preferred for the purpose.

It carried four greyhounds comfortably; in fact, they sometimes slept in it at night. In addition it was always supplied with water and drinking troughs. Though not rapid in its movements, it followed along





in the rear of the coursing party, carrying the pair of greyhounds which were not in the slips. After a course the tired hounds were brought back, watered, and put in the van to rest, while the other two were in their turn put in the slips. Besides serving this purpose it was a most useful all-round luggage cart, and proved very suitable for taking lunch out, shooting, and bringing home game.

Early in May the new hounds arrived. They were brother and sister, but the dog was a good deal the larger. Except in the head, which was coarser and more hound-like, they differed little from greyhounds in appearance. There was, however, one notable difference; both, especially the dog, threw their tongue when hunting, and both had some little scenting powers.

It was not till the third time I had them out that we at last got blood. Three of us went out to the scene of my early discomfiture with the two jackals. In order to give them confidence I let all the hounds run together. The first hill was blank, but the second, on being beaten, produced a jack, who went straight away for the first hill, some quarter of a mile away. Away went the hounds, and away we went, my companion coming to grief over a stone wall. Just as I thought the jack was going to gain the hill, the little bitch pinned him by the leg and rolled him over. All the others then joined in, and I rode up and put an end to his struggles with a hog-spear. A jackal has no turn of speed which makes him interesting from a coursing point of view, but I was anxious to blood the hounds. A jackal will not even

run well unless he gets a good start, but they generally show fight. On this occasion it was obvious that the English dogs were unwilling to come to close quarters, as, though they were far faster, they allowed one of the others to begin. A few days afterwards they killed another, but later in the day I happened to get among bad ground just as they closed with a jackal. Missing my encouragement, they let it go. Yet, shortly afterwards, they were all equal to tackling a jackal single-handed.

It would not be of interest if I were merely to reproduce such entries from my diary as the following :

“Several good courses. Killed two hares, one jackal, one mongoose, one porcupine.”* (This seems to have been a varied day.)

“Several good runs, notably one with a fox. Killed four hares.”

Further on I come to the following :

“Four good courses with foxes—killed two. Good run after a gazelle. Also killed one mongoose.”

This is two months after my regularly beginning, and these seem to have been the first foxes I killed. I recollect they often beat me. No doubt the reason was that they were a bit fast for the Indian dogs, and the English ones were still unwilling to attack unsupported. With regard to the gazelle, all greyhounds run them eagerly at first. But by degrees they begin to realise the hopelessness of the pursuit. A gazelle is quite safe from the fastest greyhound. Even with a leg broken it gives a very good course,

* More properly a scaly anteater (*Manis*).

not by any means odds on the dogs. Some sportsmen take them out buck-shooting for use in such cases.

Not long afterwards, a curious accident happened. We had found three or four jackals together. The hounds caught one, which cried wofully. Whereupon another jackal appeared coming towards the "worry," and not till I commenced to call the hounds off to attack him did he take to his heels. I thought little of it at the time, but I have since noticed a similar incident mentioned in the papers as having occurred with an Indian pack of foxhounds. Is it paternal or filial affection that calls the second to aid the first? Or does he take the cries for those the jackal gives vent to at night when he smells food, and which are so well known to all dwellers in hot climates?

To sum up Indian coursing, the hounds required must possess speed and courage. The English greyhound has the first, but not the second therefore; a cross is necessary. The usual cross is with a native breed, of which there are one or two suitable. A cross with a Scotch deerhound would, I think, not be amiss, or better still, with the Australian kangaroo hound. The jackal is not fairly matched against greyhounds at all, the natural quarry of which in India is the fox, which is useless for hunting purposes, whereas the jackal will provide a good run with foxhounds.

III.—THE COLOMBO HOUNDS AND THE KANDY BEAGLES.

The first meeting which was called together for the purpose of starting a pack of hounds in Colombo took

place, I recollect, in the summer of 187—. I shall allude to it only briefly, because shortly after that meeting I left Colombo, and hardly ever saw that particular pack of hounds. They were foxhounds, and the intention was that they should hunt the jackal. I can't say who was the authority for the statement that we should find plenty of jacks, but the fact is there were practically none at all, and from a subsequent experience of the spicy island, extending over half-a-dozen years, I certainly wonder any one should have thought there were. I never saw a jackal anywhere in Ceylon, in the hills or the plains, north, south, east, or west. I have been told they exist in the extreme north, and the fact remains that the Colombo Hounds once—— But I anticipate. As "bagmen" were afterwards procured without difficulty, jackals must exist. But they are far from being the common objects they are in India, and in the neighbourhood of the town of Colombo they must be few and far between, for I hunted there regularly with harriers and never saw a jackal. As I said before, there are no foxes in Ceylon.

The hounds arrived in due course, all the ten couple being in good health, and I may mention that, excepting one which picked up some poison, the Colombo Hunt never lost a hound.

As soon as things were got into working order they proceeded to draw for a jackal, but I believe they only once found. At all events they only had one run. They found three jackals together, and got away with one, which gave them a splendid forty-five minutes' gallop. Then the jack turned to bay, a proceeding

which so astonished the hounds that they stopped. The master was first up and cheered them on, but the hounds unfortunately came towards him. Meanwhile the jackal slipped away, and they could never get on terms with him again.

After this bag jackals were tried, but would not run, and finally the pack descended to a drag. At the beginning of the hot weather they were sold, and it was decided to replace them with harriers after the next rains.

I have already said that during this time I was absent from Colombo. The reason was that I was for a year in the old capital of Ceylon, Kandy. The climate of Kandy is more favourable to hounds, but the country is very hilly, and much of it is covered with close jungle. The jungle contains pig and porcupine, both of which are very dangerous to hounds.

When I arrived there I found there was a scratch pack of beagles already in existence. The *modus operandi* was as follows: The hounds were trencher-fed, one or two being kept at each sportsman's bungalow. On the days fixed for hunting, the sportsmen arrived at the meet, each with his hound or hounds, and—*his gun*. The hounds were then thrown into cover, and the sportsmen took post in various places. If a hare or red deer—the muntjac or jungle sheep of India—was seen, it was promptly shot. The effect of these proceedings was that the hounds were essentially self-hunting, and sometimes one sportsman, sometimes another, carried the horn. The hunting days varied, but I regret to say Sunday

was always one — being the only day the Civil Servants, bankers, lawyers, etc., who formed the field could be sure of getting away. I recollect that this fact aroused the wrath of the Archdeacon, who preached at us one Sunday. But I am afraid even this didn't alter the fixture.

From the first, all my sporting feelings were opposed to the combination of shooting and hunting, which gave the hare no chance. But as I was the junior subscriber it was difficult for me to move the whole body of members. I commenced by volunteering to hunt the hounds. The offer was gladly accepted, as it was obvious the huntsman had the least chance of getting a shot. Somewhat to their surprise, at the next and all subsequent meets I appeared without a gun. My pleasure was the hunting, and if one of the guns outside rolled over the hunted hare I only regretted the fact. But it often happened that there were only those out whom I had converted to my ideas. Then the guns were left in the dog-carts, and by degrees we began to kill hares fairly. Having progressed so far, and got good promises of support, I called a meeting. I proposed three things: the abolition of all shooting, the keeping of the hounds in kennel—volunteering myself to find kennels—and purchase of additional hounds. After some discussion I carried all three resolutions. I had an old building at the back of my bungalow, which made a capital kennel, and I soon trained a Tamil lad into a useful whipper-in.

On Christmas Day the meet was fixed at Gangarua.

This is one of the oldest of Ceylon estates, which, having failed successively as a coffee and a sugar estate, was then holding out hopes of great promise in cacao. What made it especially desirable for beagles was that acres of it were planted with guinea-grass, nearly the whole being clear open going. To the north ran jungle-clad hills, while on two sides it was bounded by the great river Mahawelliganga, first of Ceylon rivers. The manager was a thorough sportsman. Unfortunately lame in his old age, he managed to see a wonderful deal of the fun in a car drawn by two trotting bullocks.

Soon after sunrise we left the bungalow, and ere long old Druid spoke to the drag. Tally ho! there she goes right under Ringwood's nose, and the whole pack score to cry. She circles the grassy plain, and returning to the gardens, there is a check. She has squatted, and the little hounds extend like a fan, seeking busily. A coolie has seen her stealing away by the cart-shed. It may be a fresh one, but we must chance that. On the edge of the road they take it up, but she is beat and has squatted but little further on. I walk almost on to her, and as she bounces up Barmaid has her. "Who-whoop!"

Later on we find again on the edge of the jungle that covers the hill. She goes up the hill, and I fear we shall not be able to get to hounds, but on the top she turns. There she goes across the grass, looking fresh enough. She runs nearly round the estate, and again she mounts the hill. A rare hare this! Foot by foot she retraces the old line. We, who cannot

possibly get through the jungle, wait below. Once more she emerges, now visibly more tired, and crosses the plain, trying by doubling to throw out the hounds. But though the sun is now hot, they stick to it manfully. For the third time she enters the jungle, but hardly are the hounds in than she doubles back, stotting slowly along almost black with sweat. My horn is out in a second and the hounds swing round to the sound. As they break covert they view her at the bottom of the slope. Druid is first, but the old hound has got a bit slow, and Ringwood is first up. "Who-whoop!" I run down and take her from them. She has not been dead a minute, and yet I hold her out as stiff as a poker.

"Capital run," says our host, driving up; "just three quarters of an hour."

"Have a pad," I answer. "All the hounds here, boy? Then who-whoop, worry, worry, worry!" and the hare is torn into fifty pieces.

"I'm sure they deserve her," says somebody, and we all assent.

"Now let us go and have some breakfast," says the host. What a breakfast we ate, and how we all agreed that this was the best of all possible ways of spending Christmas Day. I still remember the bill of fare—"All killed on the estate," our host assured us:

Hare Soup.

Fish (name unknown, from the river).

Porcupine Chops. Wild Boar Ham.

Red Deer Venison. Snipe.

Parrot Curry.

Something like a breakfast, we said, and I think my readers will agree.

My next innovation was to suggest riding to the hounds. In fact, I had been doing so quietly for some time on by-days when nobody was out. My suggestion met with violent opposition, but I suggested that they should come out and see. The experiment took place in the lovely ride known as Lady Horton's Walk, where I knew the plentiful walks of easy gradient would enable the most timid to see the fun. It is true we could see but little of hounds, they being mostly in the thick jungle, but when they finally ran into their hare, everybody was delighted, and it was decided that we should ride except on Sundays, on which day only some of the members who had no horses could get away.

A few miles from Kandy lie the celebrated Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya. They consist largely of beautifully-kept park land, and are almost entirely surrounded by a bend of the Mahawelliganga, which here forms a complete **S**, the estate of Gangarua, of which I have before spoken, being in the upper half and the Botanical Gardens in the lower. I had long cast an eye on these rolling grass lands, but had not quite the audacity to take hounds there uninvited. It so happened that at this time a new Superintendent arrived from England to take charge of the gardens. I called on him, and when he returned my call I artfully led the conversation round to hunting, and said I hoped he would let us meet at his bungalow shortly. He replied politely, but evidently was not keen on it.

What was to be done? I held council with two or three others, and we decided to write to him the day before we went. I need hardly say we well knew we should be there before his post. Accordingly one morning, to the surprise of the janitor, the Kandy Hounds, attended by a small field, entered the Gardens. Alas! we were never to enjoy a spin over the park. Hardly had I entered than old Druid broke away on a fresh scent, and entering a thicket of young shrubs disappeared from view. It was in vain to attempt to restrain the pack. The scene that follows beggars description. The Gardens must have been sanctuary for hares for years. Here were two or three hounds tearing a hare to pieces on a bed of rare seedlings, there two or three more going full cry through a fernery. Here, there, and everywhere were single hounds running separate hares. In the midst of the hurly-burly the new director appeared on the scene, furious. I am sorry to say the scene so tickled my risible faculties that I was simply rolling in my saddle with laughter. Indeed it was impossible for me to hear a word for the noise of the hounds. At last I was able to explain, apologise, and generally soothe the irate botanist. He accepted my apologies, but asked me to withdraw my hounds. This was done with difficulty, and we rode on to the neighbouring sugar estate. Here we soon found, and after a good gallop returned home.

One more run, and I have done. The meet was at the Commissariat Stores, and a hare was soon afoot. After running a ring or two she went off down the

road by the Mosque, and into the town of Kandy. What a hubbub! More than she likes, for she turns across the new railway, up through the officers' quarters on to the parade-ground. As I arrived there this was the scene I witnessed: Half a hundred British soldiers full cry, frightening my poor little hounds off the line. Fortunately, the thick jungle chokes them off. But the hare evidently has a love for soldiers, for turning down again she once more crosses the parade-ground, and the hounds pull her down in the corner of a barrack-room. I present her to the dwellers therein, and no doubt she goes to swell the day's ration.

When I left Kandy not long after, I had the satisfaction of handing over to my successor a perfectly efficient pack of hounds. I believe they were soon after given up, owing to nearly all the old members of the Hunt leaving the station.

I returned to Colombo to find the new pack of harriers in working order. I was offered, and gladly accepted, the post of whip. We did the thing more smartly in Colombo, huntsmen and whips wearing the orthodox green frock with silver buttons. Only instead of hunting caps we wore white helmets, for the sun was often high before we returned home.

The available hunting country at Colombo consisted mostly of cinnamon gardens, interspersed with groves of cocoa-nut trees. The cinnamon is a laurel-like plant, growing to a height of about five feet, though sometimes it is as high as eight or nine. The gardens are drained with large main drains, into which

smaller ones run at right angles, gridiron fashion. These do not form a formidable leap, but are the frequent cause of falls, as they are often overgrown with ferns and quite invisible.

I found the hounds in good working order, and showing capital sport. At first they suffered a good deal from too many hares, but later on things became better. The meets took place at five-fifty a.m. As the kennels were some four miles out of town, this meant an early start for the whips. When the meet was some miles from the kennels I was frequently in the saddle at four-twenty a.m. Besides this, the cinnamon scrub was often soaking wet, and as we whips *had* to go into it, we were often wet through nearly to the waist before the hounds found. In addition to this, the cinnamon abounded with a peculiarly vicious species of red ant, whose bite is exactly like having a red-hot needle run into one, and which frequently got down our necks and up our sleeves. I do not recall any incidents particularly calling for record with these hounds, except that we once found a curious species of game. Hearing the hounds barking furiously we rode into the scrub, and found them facing two enormous pythons. These were secured and carried home by coolies, when they were found to measure eighteen feet each.

I must now leave the Colombo Hounds, and come to the form of hunting which is far and away the most exciting and interesting that is followed in Ceylon.



IV.—ELK* HUNTING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CEYLON.

I naturally feel a diffidence in writing of this branch of Ceylon sport, as it has been so fully described by that best of sporting writers, Sir Samuel Baker. However, as the "Rifle and Hound in Ceylon" has now been written many years, I may be allowed to devote a few pages to this most fascinating sport, especially as my day in Ceylon was long after that of the famous trio† of brothers, all, alas! now dead.

Elk-hunting in Ceylon is nearly always carried out on foot. Of late years it has been the fashion for several of the masters of crack packs to form a camp for hunting purposes in the Elk Plains or the Horton Plains, where hounds can sometimes be followed on horseback; but this is only for a week or so in the year. The elk frequent the thick jungles, which are interspersed between the coffee estates, and commit mighty ravages in the fields of guinea-grass, which are grown for the benefit of the planters' horses and cattle. When they become too great a nuisance a drive is organised, and some are shot and the others dispersed. But if it is a district where there is a pack of hounds they afford finer sport still. Most districts possess hounds of some sort. Many of the packs are of the scratch variety, consisting of hounds crossed with the native pariah dog, terriers, etc. With such packs seizers are generally used. These are Scotch deer-hounds, or kangaroo or Rampur hounds. The pack

* *Elk* is a misnomer applied to the sambur deer in Ceylon.

† Samuel, Valentine, and John Baker.

is then used to drive the deer to the open, where the seizers are slipped at him. Their speed and size forces him to the water, where he is speedily despatched.

There are, however, several crack packs, consisting entirely of English foxhounds, with whom the chase is carried on exactly as it is on Exmoor, except that "tufters" are not used, as the sportsmen being on foot they could not be stopped. It is hardly necessary to say that such packs are only found in the possession of wealthy planters. The cost of transport of hounds from England is more than that of the hounds themselves, say ten pounds a couple. Hounds are not long-lived in Ceylon; the wet jungle and the hot sun soon bring on liver disease, and many fall victims to the panther or wild boar, and even to the elk himself. So, independent of feeding, the cost of hounds is considerable.

Again it is Christmas Day—a year previous to the one I have before mentioned. I am a guest of a sporting planter, well known on the Ceylon turf and in the Blackmoor Vale. My host, F——, arouses me while it is still dark, and I hastily dress myself. Tea despatched, I go to the kennel with him. Six or seven couple of foxhounds are the occupants. One is picked out as lame, and another as "seedy." These are shut up, and the rest are let out and bound round us. A rate and a crack of the whip reduces them to order, and we start for a neighbouring hill, meeting on the way a couple of neighbouring planters.

The covert to be drawn is situated on the shoulder of a bare peak, the very name of which I have

forgotten. The hounds dash into cover, F—— follows them, and I am left looking at the glorious scene. The mist fills the hollows, and the peaks rise like islands in a gray sea. Gradually the rising sun disperses the mist and the deep valleys come into view, till at last I see the town and lake of Kandy, nearly three thousand feet below.

But hark ! a challenge interrupts my thoughts, and soon it is taken up by various hounds, and the chorus swells. At first it comes towards me, and then I hear a crash below, followed by a loud “ Tally ho, away ! ” from F——. The hounds fly to his voice, and I tear down the hill, catching sight only of a couple of forms bounding on below me. A slight turn lets me in.

“ A stag ? ” I inquire.

“ Yes, a big one. ” But we want all our wind to follow. Down, down we go. We cross the Kandy road, and the jungle gets thicker and the cry of hounds fainter. At last I get into an awful place. The jungle is literally so thick that I am some feet from the ground, and even my weight no longer enables me to divide the thorny branches. I have to get out my hunting-knife, and cut my way through. Even then it takes me some twenty minutes, and when I emerge, all signs of the chase have disappeared. There is nothing for it but to return to the bungalow. On my way I overtake one of the field, an elderly planter, who has been choked off before myself.

“ Heaven knows where they’ve gone, ” says he. “ This is a desperate side of the district for hunting. ”

We return to the bungalow, and I find the coolie with

my box has started for Kandy, where I had promised to breakfast. So I must ride down as I am, although my clothes are rather ragged from the morning's work. Before F——'s horse is saddled for me the other planter turns up, also having lost the hounds.

"F—— is sure to find them," he says, "he knows so well where the elk run here."

But before I am a mile on my road I meet the master, also disconsolate.

"They've beat me this time. I have been to two or three watercourses, but can't hear or see anything. I'm going to get my pony and try some other places. Good-bye, sorry you hadn't more fun."

Just as I reach the town of Kandy, I become aware of an excitement. Close to the railway station and behind the new gaol is a shallow pond. This pond is now surrounded by excited natives, and I hear their dogs barking.

"*Dorai*," says the groom, who is running at my horse's heels, "*dorai, koota, koota.*" (Sir, the hounds, the hounds.)

I ride hastily forwards.

Yes, there are the hounds, sure enough, within the circle of natives. There, too, little more than knee-deep in the pool, stands a splendid stag sambur facing the baying pack. To jump off my horse and whip out my hunting-knife, at the same time pushing through the crowd of chattering natives, is the work of a moment. On the edge I pause. It is not exactly a pleasant matter to despatch the elk. His horns are

very serviceable-looking, and the depth of the water is not great enough to impede his movements. I wade cautiously in, rather behind than in front of him, but looking out cautiously for a kick. The danger of this particular "stick" consists in the fact that the stag has long since recovered his wind, and is in full possession of his senses and activity. Aroused by my arrival, the hounds redouble their attacks, which are mostly vocal. However, they distract him for a minute. I run hastily in, and seizing the base of the left antler, thrust my knife, edge uppermost, into the broad chest. A swing of his head sends me flying and staggering, almost on my back, half across the pond. But the knife has gone home, as the low bellow of pain and wrath attests. The smell of the blood excites the hounds, who can hardly be restrained from dashing on the spear-pointed horns. Slowly the stag's strength leaves him, his knees bend and he is down. We drag him to shore, and there and then, to the accompaniment of St. Paul's Church bells, he is galloched, and the offal thrown to the eager pack. My next proceeding is to have the stag taken to the friend's house to which I am bound, where the pack are shut up till F—— can send for them.

The danger of tackling an unwounded stag with a knife is considerable, especially if the wielder of the weapon does not understand what he is about. Not long before the incidents I am relating a young Englishman, new to Ceylon, met his death from this cause. The deer—it was a hind—was "set up" in somewhat shallow water. As he went in to knife it

the deer broke bay, and as he was in the act of using his knife *overhand*, like a dagger, it was forced into his own chest, causing almost instantaneous death. A knife should invariably be used *underhand* with the edge uppermost. It is hardly necessary for me to say that the knife on which one's life may depend should *never* be used for any other purpose than that for which it is made. It should be kept as sharp as a razor, and if not of the finest workmanship, should be of iron. An old file makes an excellent *couteau-de-chasse*. Inferior steel is worse than useless. The way to test a knife is to drive it through a penny; if it will not stand this it is useless. As the following anecdote will prove, English hunting-knives, though bearing well-known Sheffield names, are not to be relied upon* always.

One morning F—— and I were out with his hounds. They soon found, but to our disgust, before they had run far, their cry turned to furious barking, interspersed with doleful yellings, which left no doubt as to the nature of the game. We hurried towards them.

On arriving on the scene we found the boar—for such we had rightly concluded it to be—had taken refuge in a thicket of dense lantana jungle, where we could hardly see him. What was worse, we could not possibly get to him, the only openings being a couple of game runs not two feet high. Meanwhile F——

* My own knife is of the well-known make of the Wilkinson Sword Company in Pall Mall. It is absolutely reliable, and as it has seen service in three continents, I may say it has been well tested.

was nearly distracted by fear for his hounds, which were, no doubt, getting sadly mauled. At last we decided that I should take the spear F——'s dog-boy carried, and crawling in on the path behind him endeavour to make him break bay. F—— stationed himself by the only other exit. At first I got along on hands and knees, but soon the thorns were too low for that, and I had to lie flat on the ground. I must own that I did not like the situation. Supposing the pig had changed position, and was facing me. He would most likely charge me, and, prostrate as I was, I could hardly hope to stop him. However, fortune favoured me, and I soon saw his broad quarters turned right towards me. Raising myself silently, I drove the spear into them with all my force. He at once broke bay, passing close by F——, who, jumping on one side, brought his knife down with all his force. He was a little too quick, and the knife, taking the boar right between the eyes, shivered like glass, although, as we afterwards found, the point penetrated the skull. Fortunately, the boar disregarded the now defenceless F——, and, closely followed by the hounds, turned to bay again some fifty yards on with his quarters to a tree. F—— got behind it and drove the spear nearly through him, enabling me to finish him with my knife.

We had now to count casualties. One hound lay dead, his heart and lungs exposed to view. Another—a draft, by the way, from the Colombo pack—was laid open from shoulder to thigh, but afterwards recovered. The leg of a fox-terrier was hanging by little more

than the skin, and, though she recovered, it was only to be lame for life.

The boar was a monster. After the hounds had eaten a good deal of him and he had been cleaned, he still weighed three hundred pounds. He must therefore have been equal to the largest European boars.

This episode is perhaps hardly elk-hunting. But it is one which may be encountered any day when looking for elk, and therefore, I think, admissible in this chapter.

V.—THE RAJPUTANA HOUNDS.

My last winter in India was approaching, and I had never seen foxhounds at work in that country. The station where I was living was not altogether suitable to hunting, as there were many rocky cactus-covered hills, which doubtless would carry little scent, and much open sandy plain.

In the month of September I was at Bombay on leave, when I happened to hear of a small pack of foxhounds for sale not far away. They were the remains of half the Bombay pack of the previous year,* and had been bought and hunted by the inhabitants of a small station to the south. Now the rains were at an end they were useless to them, and they were for sale. I telegraphed an offer, which was accepted, and the hounds were sent to me. On my return from Bombay I took them home with me. They consisted

* The Bombay Hunt has a new pack out from England each year.

entirely of dog-hounds, of rather different shapes and sizes, but in good health and serviceable enough.

When I returned home I had a kennel improvised out of a coachhouse with an adjoining yard. Instead of benches there were charpoys, or native bedsteads, covered with cocoanut fibre. When the weather got cold plenty of straw was added. As my system of kennel answered admirably, I propose to give it for the information of any who may be keeping, or intending to keep, hounds in tropical climates.

The hounds were fed twice a day, on returning from exercise or hunting. The food was Indian meal (maize) with soup poured over it. In every fifth meal, however, rice was substituted for meal. Except on hunting days, every hound was thoroughly brushed and hand-rubbed after his morning and before his evening exercise. Castor oil was freely used when required, and in case of fever the temperature was lowered with small doses of tartar-emetic, after which quinine was freely administered. Above all, the hounds were never exposed to the rays of the sun between nine a.m. and four p.m. A covered van, rather larger than that mentioned before, was used to take them out and bring them home. It is my belief that by following this system, hounds can be kept in India in good condition for some years, provided that they are sent to the hills from April to September. There is an idea that hounds lose their scenting powers in India, but I believe it to be unfounded. Mine had been out two years all but a few months, and their

scent was quite normal. I should advise any one who feels inclined to go in for hounds in India to keep a sharp look-out among the natives' dogs. Some very hound-like animals can be picked up, and these crossed with the foxhound and then crossed back again, should produce useful hounds that would stand the climate well.

After some preliminary exercise and drilling my dog-boy to act as a whipper-in, I felt ready to try a bye-day. Accordingly, on the 8th of October, I proceeded to draw some patches of cotton within a mile of my house. The cotton-fields are the best of all coverts in the Indian plains. They are artificially irrigated, and consequently the damp soil generally carries a scent and enables hounds to get away on good terms with their jack. Again, they are generally not more than an acre or two in extent, which enables the huntsman to see the jack break away. On this occasion hounds found in a very small patch. The cotton being usually about thirty inches high, it is a very pretty sight to see hounds running in covert, the waving stems, and now and then a head, being generally all that is to be seen. The jack slipped away into an adjoining patch, and then into a *nullah* (watercourse), and thus got away without being viewed. Seeing the leading hounds carry a line out of the cotton, I got out my horn, and was delighted to find the pack very handy. They literally flew to the horn, and settling down, raced across the open. In ten minutes they ran into the jack, which was a half-grown cub. I was delighted with this result, for many old

hands had said that foxhounds would never do any good in Rajputana.

But I had yet to learn that unaccountable as scent is in England, it is even more so in India. "Oh, that weary scent," exclaims the immortal Jorrocks in his second lecture on hunting, "that weary, incomprehensible, incontrollable phenomenon. 'Constant only in its inconstancy,' as the able hauthor of the noble science well said. Believe me, my beloved 'earers, there's nothing so queer as scent, 'cept a woman."* But incomprehensible as scent is in England, it is infinitely more so in India. In England there are certain conditions of weather which we feel certain will affect scent in a certain way. For instance, who ever knew a good scent go with a falling barometer? How rarely, again, scent is bad on a "seasonable" day. But India has hardly any variations of climate, and the only atmospheric effect I ever noticed there was that scent was invariably bad when the ground was damp after a shower, when it might be expected to be best. I have known hounds run at top speed for half an hour, and then check; and not by the most patient endeavours could I ever induce one hound to own the line again.

The next two evenings I went out I experienced a total want of scent, so I determined to try a morning. Accordingly the van was sent on to a village some four miles off where there was a very large acreage of cotton. Hounds soon found, but it was impossible for a long time to get the jack to face the open. At last

* "Handley Cross," chap. xxxiii., p. 267, original edition.

he did and ran into a network of sandy nullahs, where scent failed altogether. After thirty-five minutes' work this was rather hard on hounds. I crossed the road and found again at five minutes before eight. Although, or perhaps because, the sun had got stronger, scent had improved. Hounds ran from scent to view and rolled him over at half-past eight. I may here remark that I had often afterwards cause to notice that scent in India generally improves as the sun gets hotter, for which reason I always found that my best runs took place in the afternoon, after the ground had been exposed to the scorching rays.

The 26th of October was a bitter cold morning. I was in the saddle before daylight, and had to wait some time till I could see to draw. Consequently I experienced the extraordinary sensation (for India) of feeling my hands quite numb with cold, though I had gloves on. Scent was bad, and though they found twice we had no run. This day was only noteworthy as being that on which I killed my only fox. I happened to see the fox—a desert one—crossing the plain a couple of hundred yards away, and galloped on till hounds got a view. They never lost sight of him, and in some ten minutes killed him.

Four days later came "the run of the season." After several blank draws I put hounds into a large cotton-field, and almost before they spoke to him a jackal went away at the far side. Hounds came to my horn and went away at a great pace, so much so that I had to push my Arab along to live with them. The slower hounds tailed shamefully, but there was nobody

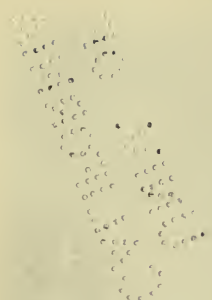
to see. At the end of eleven minutes they checked, but I was fortunate enough to hit it off at once by casting on. They soon settled down again, and the pace, though not so very great, remained fast. At last they checked again, having now been running three quarters of an hour. As it was just on dark, and my native whip was nowhere to be seen, I stopped them. The distance, measured between the two villages, close to which the find and last check respectively took place, was exactly five miles in a straight line, but of course hounds ran a good deal more. I may add that some weeks later I found in the same covert. The jack broke in exactly the same place, heading in the same direction. Although the atmospheric conditions were exactly similar, hounds, who got away on good terms with him, literally could not run a yard.

During November and December sport continued good, but as it is my object to give my readers a general idea of the sport rather than a series of accounts of runs, I will not draw further on my diary. Moreover, some of the runs were described in *The Field* at the time. At last the day came when the regiment had to commence its long march to the other side of India. I had arranged for the continuance of the Hunt in the country, but my favourites were to follow the horn of another. It was with feelings of regret I got into the dogcart to drive to the last meet.

For some time we did not find. At last a jack went away from a small cotton patch. I tallied him away, but as hounds came towards me another broke,

and they got away in view with the second. For some time they raced him, till, seeing he was likely to get into some cactus-covered rocks, I pushed my horse along and headed him off towards the plain. His heart failed him then, and ere many more minutes had passed Barrister had him by the back—Who-whoop!





CHAPTER XIX.

PHEASANT-SHOOTING.

“ I DON'T bother much about pheasant-shooting ; it's all very well for those who have got hundreds of acres of wood, and who can afford to rear birds for turning down, but it doesn't come much in my way.”

I fancy I hear some of my readers talking like this. I grant you, my dear sir, that there is some truth in the observation, but for all that I have some very pleasant recollections of rough days' shooting, on which we had plenty of fun, and the bag consisted principally of pheasants. It is true the actual shooting does not contribute much to the fun, for the man who cannot make sure of a cock pheasant getting up out of a hedgerow ought, in theory, to be deprived of his gun. In practice, however, we have all missed them sometimes—and seen them missed, too, by shots of some reputation. That they ought not to be missed can be shown—if, indeed, it is not too obvious to require demonstration—from the fact that I have shot them so on several occasions with a rook-rifle. By the way, it is not (*crede experto*) at all a bad way of collecting a few birds for the table to walk round the coverts towards evening with a pottering retriever and

one of the above-mentioned little weapons. You can hear the birds get on the wing, and very often they will only flutter into the first big tree, where they afford pretty enough shots for the rifle at sixty or seventy yards.

The common pheasant affords by its presence in the British Isles one of the most triumphant examples of successful acclimatisation. Originally—as its scientific name, *Phasianus Colchicus*, imports—a native of Colchis, or rather of Asia Minor and Central Asia generally, it has established itself among us with a firmness which I doubt if even the promised “land nationalisation” will successfully combat, and holds its own in unreserved districts where the native black-game has long since died away. I know English counties where for miles there is no preserve of any kind, and for dozens of miles none where pheasants are artificially reared, where yet, in spite of enemies furred, feathered, and trousered, every year brings forth its quota of wild birds, sufficient to afford the true sportsman some amusing days’ rough shooting.

It is, however, not only the sportsman who would deprecate the absence of the bright-coloured bird from our islands. His desirability on the dinner-table, where he is decidedly inferior, to my mind at least, to all our native varieties of game, may be urged by some as justifying his existence among us, and it must be admitted that what he lacks in quality he makes up in quantity, besides being favourably known to gourmands as the very best stock for certain soups.

But it is to the casual wayfarer through our

English rural districts the pheasant's beauty appeals. Even as he is whirled along in the train, the traveller's eye is caught by the bright hues of the cocks, attended by their more soberly clad hens, feeding along the woodside or gleaning on the short stubble. I know no bird which so greatly gives the impression of gorgeousness to a landscape as the pheasant does—save and except the peacock. Peafowl in their native jungles are a sight not yet familiar to all of us, however, even in these “globe-trotting” days, but the pheasant is to be seen almost everywhere. I have been surprised by his presence on the water-side very few miles above Hampton Court, I have seen him on the lower spurs of Helvellyn, on the whilom Royal Forest of Exmoor, and on the rifle-ranges at Bisley. Even when unseen, his loud challenge—commonly, but surely badly, described as a crow—imparts a feeling of wildness to the landscape, whence, alas! all the aboriginal sounds of this nature—the cry of the buzzard, the whistle of the otter, and the yawn-like sound produced by the amorous stag—have long since been banished by civilisation.

Almost every autumn the sporting papers treat us to a disquisition on driving or not driving. As regards grouse and partridges I bring an open mind to the question. There is much to be said on both sides. As regards the pheasant there is only one possible view to be taken. The pheasant was as obviously made for driving as the fox for hunting. How often have I laughed at the denunciations in a

certain class of newspapers of what they—but no one else—term the *battue*. It is really too amusing to read the diatribes they publish against “feather-bed sportsmen” and “farm-yard game.” I should like to take one or two of them to a place I know and where I often shoot. It is a grassy valley only about some eighty yards wide. The wood runs half-way down the hill, which here projects like a step, and then falls almost perpendicularly. On its outer edge grow a row of ancient oaks. Over these the birds come surging down the wind, the guns being posted by the streamlet in the bottom. Small wonder they speak of the birds as “the highest I ever saw.” It is obvious that they can only just be within the extreme range of a shot-gun, and that therefore unless fairly hit in the head or breast, there is no chance of stopping them. Yet I have seen men “dragging them down” one after another, with the regularity of a machine. I should like to place some of the above-mentioned newspaper critics in the line of guns here, and lay a good bet that they would not in the whole beat touch as much as a tail-feather.

No ; if there is any time when an old cock pheasant does present any resemblance to a barndoor fowl, it is when he flutters up aimlessly out of a bramble-bush or a patch of late corn. Yet this is what our critic would call shooting him “in the old-fashioned sportsmanlike way.” Why, it should be any odds on a flintlock musket of the last century !

Nevertheless, I need hardly turn over one of the old diaries (of which I have, alas ! an accumulating

heap) to find the records of days on which the long-tailed bird has afforded me rough-and-ready fun. The following was a representative day :

The legitimate season of stag-hunting on Exmoor had drawn to a close, and I, who had seen some thirty odd stags fairly done to death, was beginning to think of a return to more civilised parts in order to be ready for the opening days of fox-hunting. The love of the "chase of the wild red deer," which grows upon one so, had entered into me, and as our worthy Master held out the hope of one, or even two by-days, I lingered on in the land of Lorna Doone. One day towards the end of the third week in October I formed one of a small band of sportsmen who stood round while the Exmoor Hounds broke up their fox after a capital moorland gallop. A jolly "Zummerzet" farmer, whom I had often met out with these hounds and the staghounds, came up to me and asked if I would care for a day's shooting on the following Saturday. I had little enough to do with my off-days, so jumped at the chance.

"There be a tidy few pheasants on the farm," said he. "Muster T——, of Dulverton, be coming too, and I dare say he'll drive ye over."

So it was arranged, and the Saturday morning found us driving out of the quaint little town of Dulverton. The farm—the very name of which I forget—was situated on a sloping bank, which ran down to those great Haddon coverts, so well known to, and so little loved by, stag-hunters. On this occasion they owed me nothing, for had they not, only four

days previously, provided us with that celebrated one-horned stag which took us to the Horner Mill—a fourteen-mile point—in an hour and fifteen minutes?

Our cheery host was standing on the doorsteps as we drove up.

“That’s right,” said he; “now come in and have a cup of beer or zider after your drive.”

A quarter of an hour later saw us at work. The farm was so laid out that most of the fences ran parallel to the big woodlands; the connecting fences running up and down hill were mostly short. All the fences consisted of high banks covered with thick beech and other scrub, and some were overgrown with bushy ivy.

We began by beating the fences nearest the coverts. The few pheasants which we found here required very quick shooting to prevent their falling into the wood, where they would probably have been lost, as we had no retriever. At last these were fully beaten out, and then the cream of the day’s shooting began. Along the shoulder of the hill ran one or two fields separated by especially thick fences. Our one beater, with an old spaniel, beat carefully along these from the upper side, the host standing just below the fence, and T—— and I half across the field, some distance apart. Our host was, truth to tell, a poorer shot than he was horseman, and the bulk of the birds came over us two, and having gathered both way and elevation gave very pretty shots. I don’t mean to say that there were a great many birds in the fence; for my host had not led me to expect more than a rough

day's shooting. But in the forenoon we did uncommonly well. We went into the farm for lunch and did justice to what I may call a home-made meal, for it consisted of a couple of delicious chickens of our hostess's rearing, a home-cured ham—equally excellent—and cider from home-grown apples.

Early in the afternoon a pair of partridges got up wild, and it seemed to me they dropped in one of the thick hedges we had already beaten. T—— pooh-pooed the idea.

“Well,” I pleaded, “let's go back and try at any rate. It can't hurt, and with one gun on each side, some one will get a shot.”

“They wouldn't light in a hedge like that, and if they did they would have run out by this time. I'm not going back.”

“Well,” I said, “wait for me, anyway, and I'll go.”

They agreed to this, and taking the spaniel I went back. When I got to the hedge I put the dog up at one end. Presently he put up the birds, which by good luck got out my side, and I killed them both, a proceeding which gave me the double satisfaction both of bagging the birds, and being able to say “I told you so.”

It soon became evident that there was hardly enough shooting on the farm for a whole day. But our host pointed out a bit of a wood at one end which also belonged to him. It was, however, still in full leaf, and it was very doubtful if we should do any good there. Still we could only try. As the youngest I volunteered to go through with the beater while the

other two guns stood outside. I had not gone far when I heard the spaniel yap, and crash! a warrantable* deer broke through the covert before me. What life a few members of the deer tribe afford in covert shooting, even when, as in Somerset, they are sacred from the gun! This lends a charm to German shooting. One never can tell when a roe or even a bigger deer will afford variety to the day's sport.

Is it useless to hope in these days of acclimatisation that we may once more see some members of the deer tribe haunting our larger English woodlands? It is true red deer do sad mischief, and so do fallow deer. But I have never heard any complaints in Germany of much damage done by the roe, which is essentially a woodland deer. In the year 1890, sixty-five thousand odd roe-deer were shot in Austria, and one million three hundred thousand odd hares. It is hardly likely that the roe-deer made much difference in the damage, but one goes to few good shoots in Austria where some at least of the graceful little creatures do not help to swell the bag.

As we emerged from the covert a woodcock rose from some holly bushes and I was lucky enough to bag him—the first of the year. Our beat had enabled them to add a brace of birds to the total, which was twelve and a half brace of pheasants, one brace of partridges, six couple of rabbits, a hare and a woodcock, and with this result we were very well satisfied.

Any paper on pheasant-shooting would, however,

* A warrantable deer, in stag-hunting phrase, is a deer fit for hunting—*i.e.*, a stag four years old and upwards.

be incomplete without some remarks on what, as I have said, newspapers call a "battue," but the latter-day sportsman a "pheasant-shoot." Although the First of October is legally the commencement of the long-tail's troubles, there is really but little done, except in the rough way I have described, till November is nearly out. Both on account of the beaters, and on account of the guns, it is desirable to postpone operations till most of the leaves are off the trees. On the other hand the keeper is always anxious that it should not be put off too late. The pheasant is naturally a wanderer, and it requires both high feeding and care to induce them to stay in the coverts where they are originally turned down.

Foxhounds, again, are prejudicial to the ultimate bag, and if they run through the coverts a few times they move a large number of the birds, some of which do not ever return again. It is usually the custom to notify the M. F. H. when the day for shooting certain coverts is fixed, or approximately so. He may then be relied on to do all in his power to keep his hounds from disturbing them, for "live and let live" is the only possible maxim on which fox-hunting can be carried on nowadays. Perhaps "kill and let kill" expresses the matter more correctly in this case.

Let me turn again to some of my old diaries and find a good day's covert-shooting. I may say in this kind of sport I consider the term "good" as relative to the head of game brought to hand. No other sport with which I am acquainted admits of this test.

Here is a day which may serve our purpose. In response to an invitation of some weeks' standing, a bright December morning found my dogcart rolling briskly through the park at ——. The sun had already commenced to dispel the hoar frost on the grass, where the dun deer stood carelessly watching the accustomed sight of a carriage. In fact the cob, nervous as horses always are of a herd of deer, was the more frightened of the two. The horse's feet rang sharply on the gravel of the outer quadrangle till I pulled up and jumped out. At the sound of the bell a stableman ran round to take the trap, and I walked through the inner courtyard to the open hall-door. In the great hall I found a typical group of English sportsmen assembled. Our host, the Master of the local hounds, and perhaps more at home in the saddle than with the breech-loader, hastens to greet me. Of the six other men assembled some were known to me and neighbours, while others were strangers. It was half-past ten, the hour which had been fixed, but no one seemed anxious for a move. A glass of Benedictine was not unacceptable after my twelve miles' drive. At last a start was made. An under-keeper brought me my gun and cartridge-belt out of the dogcart, and we walked some half-mile through the park to the wood outside, where we were to begin. Here we were posted on a by-road facing a small slope, and the signal was given to the yet unseen beaters. Presently a hen pheasant comes swinging over the bank, but sex is not sacred to-day, and my neighbour on the right doubles her up scien-

tifically. It is the usual, and as I think mistaken, practice in England to shoot hen pheasants on the first and sometimes the second time the coverts are shot, and to spare them on the last occasion. In my opinion the head of game would benefit more by their being spared the first time or two and shot the last. The reason is this, that the cock pheasant is naturally given to wander more than the hen, and many a bird who is brought to the guns the first time and escapes, will never be shot at again that year. Whereas if hens were spared the first time, the just proportion of sexes would be more easily arranged for at the end of the season. However, I haven't much time to think about it to-day, for several birds cross me in quick succession. They are going faster than I thought, too, for the first is clean missed, but I find the spot with the next and wish for a second gun. My left-hand neighbour has turned round, and is taking them going away. This makes the shooting easier, but is a practice disliked by owners of shooting, as being apt to produce "runners." Meanwhile the beaters come nearer and the shooting gets quicker. The ground game, too, gets on the move, and cries of "Hare! Hare forward!" and "Rabbit up!" "Rabbit to you, sir," mingle in the firing. At last the rattle of fire-arms dies out, and the last old cock pheasant, who has waited till the beaters almost trod on him, flutters out to be ignominiously slain. We stand awhile to point out where any bird that may have fallen rather far off may be lying; and then move off to a long belt of young firs in the park itself. Not a very

interesting beat this. The birds are a bit easy, but there is lots of ground game. I am rather at the side, so I only hear a "tally-ho" from some one at the end of the belt, and see a fox quietly trotting across the park in the distance.

This beat finished, we move off to the house for luncheon. Our host has to stand some chaff on the subject of the fox, who has taken up his abode so close to the M. F. H. A lunch indoors is, I always think, a mistake on shooting-days, and it seems to me that we waste a lot of time before we again assemble on the hall-steps. This time we have but few yards to go, for the beat is in the shrubberies round the house, where we find plenty of birds. The winter sun is getting low before we take our places for the last beat, the *bonne bouche* of the day. On rising ground in the park stands a longish thicket of evergreens and underwood, with a large pond on one side, and scattered throughout it a good number of old oaks and elms. Behind the pond come the gardens and the house, so there is no fear of the birds going that way. Consequently one gun is posted at the other side, and the rest of us are formed in double line at the end. The beat begins. At first it is a bit slow for the second line of guns, but soon the birds come thicker and thicker, and all, as Jefferies* says, is "smoke, fire, and slaughter." My cartridges are out, and I have to borrow a couple of handfuls to go on with, and still the birds come swinging over the high tree-tops. At last the fire slackens and dies out.

* "Amateur Poacher."

The grass behind us is quite covered with heaps of bright-coloured feathers, and here and there lies a hare or rabbit.

We have time now to turn to the ladies, who, with the Rector and a couple more near neighbours, have come out to see "The Tump" shot. Meanwhile the beaters are collecting the birds. At last the head-keeper approaches *the* guest of the day.

"Would you like to see the list of game, my lord?"

His lordship, a stout and very jolly person, whose want of dignity must be very disconcerting to so very ceremonious an official as the head-keeper, reads it out to the rest of us as follows :

"A hundred and forty-seven pheasants, seventy rabbits, twenty-four hares, three woodcock, and a woodpigeon. Total: two hundred and forty-five head. A very good day, too," he adds.

To this we all heartily assent.

CHAPTER XX.

HARD LUCK.

THE middle of September had passed, but the plains were still very hot. It was the year 18—, and the rains in the Bombay Presidency had been very scanty, in fact, there had hardly been any to speak of. In spite of this, or rather perhaps for this very reason, the season had been a healthy one, and there had only been one or two cases of cholera among the troops at the station of —.

It was, as I have said, still very hot. So the men who had been on leave to the hills said. We, whose minds went back to the grilling days of May, thought it was not half bad. The *cuscus tatties*, which alone had made life bearable, had long since been banished. (For the benefit of the uninitiated I may explain that these are screens, woven from the sweet-scented cuscus grass, which exactly fit the doorways on the windward side of the house. During the hot weather they are put up as soon as the sun has a little power, and kept wet all day by a coolie stationed in the verandah. A cool-scented draught of air steals through them, which is the only air admitted to the house, all other doors and windows being tightly closed. With these and a

punkah, which never stops, we were able to keep the temperature of our bungalow down to about eighty-five degrees at noon. Of course the rooms were nearly dark.) We were even thinking whether we might not dispense with the punkah at night shortly. Still, it was hot enough.

One morning my *shikari* returned from an expedition in search of game. I may remark that most of these expeditions in search of game are apocryphal, the *shikari* merely spending two or three days in the bosom of his family, and trusting to bazaar rumours for news of game.

“Well,” I said, “where have you been?”

“Danta jungles, sahib.”

“What khubber (intelligence) have you brought?”

“*Bot nilghai hi, sahib, ek burra byle hi.*” (There are many nylghai there, sahib, there is one big bull.)

Nylghai are not much sought after as a rule, but I had nothing particular on hand, so I determined to try for this bull. After a dispute with the *shikari* on the number of beaters necessary, which I cut down to a dozen, I dismissed him, promising to meet him at Danta next morning.

Accordingly, having discussed my early tea, I mounted my horse and cantered off to the rendezvous, which was only some four miles away. Here I found the *shikari* and his beaters, some of whom had seen the bull, accompanied by four cows, leaving the jungle at daylight. They had entered a jungle-covered valley in the mountain, from which they had not been seen

to emerge. No doubt they would lie up there for the day.

"The beaters must stop here," I said; "you (to the man who had seen the herd) and the *shikari* come with me."

About a couple of hundred yards from the valley I stopped. This was the nature of the ground. From the main hill above a spur ran out, forming a small valley on each side. The one to my left was full of tamarisk and camel-thorns. This was the one where the herd were said to be. The other was more open, with a lot of loose rocks lying about. The wind was pretty well on my left shoulder as I faced the hill.

My plans were soon made. It was obvious if I went up the right-hand valley and crawled out along the spur I should get a shot. If the antelopes—*for* huge and unwieldy as the nylghai is, he is a true antelope—were lying down, as was probably the case, a whistle from me would soon bring them to their feet.

I left the two natives with the strictest injunctions to remain where they were, and not make too much noise, and taking my 12-bore rifle from the *shikari* I started off on my stalk. Before approaching the hill I walked off half a mile to my right, and then returning, completely concealed by the spur, I approached the rocky gorge.

My "Field" boots were soled with jute, making my footsteps inaudible, but the stalk was still one of some difficulty. The chaotic masses of loose stones

and rocks, the fall of any one of which would have betrayed me, required great caution to surmount. Added to which the hill was very steep, and I had only one hand to aid me, my rifle being unprovided with a sling. The sun, too, had now gained its full strength, and as I was quite shut off from the breeze, and carrying a heavy rifle, it is small wonder the perspiration was pouring off me long before I reached the top. At last I did so, however, and sat down behind the last crest to make my final preparations and get my wind.

In a few minutes I pushed my rifle on to the slab rocks which formed the spur and crawled after it myself. Another minute and I was peering into the upper part of the glen. Nothing to be seen. I crawled further with the same result. At last I got right out on the point of the rock nearest the plain. Still nothing visible, but raising my eyes I saw the *shikari* gesticulating violently. Evidently he had disobeyed my instructions and moved the herd. I stood up now and whistled, but with no result. So I climbed down and walked down the valley where the beasts had been. I had no doubt whatever in my mind as to the cause of their absence. Curiosity or sheer "cussedness" had caused the *shikari* to shift his position, and by so doing he had given them his wind. Once on their legs it is possible they may have looked over into the next gorge and seen my innocent self toiling up. Anyhow they had left the hills and re-entered the big jungle.

My first proceeding was to distribute a few well-

earned kicks between the two "haughty Rajpoots" who had spoilt my stalk. I then proceeded to inquire as to the route the herd had taken. This is all I could ascertain, as of course no one knew exactly where they had gone to.

The first two beats failed to move them, but in the third one, or rather after it, some wood-cutters reported they had seen the herd making off towards the west. I followed them up, crossing the high-road which connects Mhow with Ajmere. Here all trace seemed to be lost, and some of the men who had been sent on came back and said they could see nothing of them. As it was obvious that they must be somewhere I did not give it up, but sent my men to get some water, which they wanted badly, while I sat down in the shade of a great banyan, or wild fig, tree and ate my breakfast. After an hour's rest we started again. A long belt of jungle here ran along the base of a steep mountain. For some time we saw nothing. At last a hyæna broke back. I was tired of not shooting, so took a galloping shot at about a hundred yards and missed. I regretted afterwards that I had done so.

The jungle became thicker, and the ground was very broken by ravines. The beaters were very tired and would not keep line. I was moving on in front of them rather on the outskirts of the belt. At the end of about an hour I saw the coolie highest up the hill signalling. I halted the line, and ordered the *shikari* to make them beat it straight out. Meanwhile I hurried on. Before I had got far I distinctly heard the sound of galloping hoofs. I listened, but hearing

nothing more thought I must have been deceived, and pressed on. On reaching the top of a small hillock I got a view all round. Alas! some hundreds of yards behind, right out on the plain, I saw the herd galloping away, the rear being brought up by the big bull. This was the first time I had seen them. My horse was far away, and had he not been the chase was hopeless. They had got a tremendous start and the ground was a mass of rocks and nullahs. There was nothing to be done but to knock off and go home. I had walked over twenty miles, and my beaters were a good deal more tired than I. I promised myself, however, that I would see the big bull again.

A long interval occurred before I could keep my word. I got a spell of leave of absence and was off to the hills. At the beginning of November, however, I was back again, and sent the *shikari* out to ascertain if the herd was still in the neighbourhood. He brought back the news that it was. It happened that just then a young fellow was staying with me who had only arrived a few days before from England, or rather from Scotland, his name being Mac——. He was very anxious to have a chance at the big game. So I sent the *shikari* back, promising to meet him at the old trysting-place.

Mac—— had, of course, a rifle, a brand new Express '450. I told him he wouldn't find it the slightest use, and lent him one of my pair of 12-bores. Next morning we drove out to the ground in a hired tonga, our breakfast following in my bullock-cart, for

which I hoped we should have another use before the day was out.

The herd, we found, were lying in the big jungle. At the first drive we moved them, but the ground was rather more than two guns could cover, and they passed without being seen by either of us. As far as I could make out they had gone towards the hills, rather to the west of the valley where I had stalked them six weeks before. Here there was a long valley which ran parallel with the edge of the plain, from which it was separated by the main hill. It communicated with the plain by a gorge at right angles to both, which entered the valley about a third of the way up.

I ordered the *shikari* to take Mac—— round to the west of the valley and place him behind the ridge up to which it ran, with the main road behind him. I would enter the valley by the gorge, while the beaters went to the east and beat it right along.

Before the beaters reached me, I saw an animal moving up the valley far above me. My glass soon showed it to be the bull, and I felt sure that I should not get a shot. Still, I ordered the beaters to stand still, and hurried towards him, taking advantage of every possible bit of cover. Of course, it was no use; before I was within two hundred yards of him, he moved on again, only to halt right on the sky-line. Very fine he looked, the position increasing his natural size, which was about that of an Alderney bull. Presently he moved slowly over the ridge and was lost to sight.

Almost immediately, and as I had expected, I heard a shot, followed in a minute by another. I hurried up to the crest, where I found Mac—— and the *shikari*, but no bull. Mac—— told me that the brute had commenced to descend to his right. When it was nearly parallel with him he fired, and it at once broke back. Remembering doubtless that I was behind him it again made downwards, this time to his left. Again he fired, but the bull did not stop and was lost to their sight. Without waiting for the beaters we hastened in pursuit. Not a hundred yards on we found the bull lying under a small tree, stone-dead. He was the finest I have ever seen, his winter coat being nearly black, while in summer they are of blue-gray. One horn was nine inches long, the other, being splintered, was somewhat shorter. Jerdon, in the "Mammals of India," gives the length of the horns from seven to nine inches, so this is an extreme length. The bullet had hit him in the back-ribs, and, as it was on the left, it was the second barrel that had caused his death. This shows the killing power of a 12-bore rifle. As I said to Mac——, "If it had been your '450 he would have gone on for a week."

I sent for the bullock-cart, and caused it to be tipped up close to the bull. Even then it took the united efforts of all the beaters, a dozen men, to get it into the cart. We then went off to our breakfast.

In the afternoon we beat out the jungle I had traversed six weeks before, but with no result. At the far end of it we had our tonga waiting. The road in proved a bad one, we had a miserable pair of

ponies, and it was long after dark before we got home.

Of course, I was glad my guest should have had some luck, but it certainly was a fair example of the irony of sport. The very brute after whom I had toiled so long on a hot day, falls to the rifle of another, who had only walked an hour or so on a cool winter morning to get him. On the whole I always look back to it as an instance of very *Hard Luck*.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SPIN WITH THE PYTCHLEY.

“MR. JORROCKS,” we are told by Surtees in his immortal work,* “at length ventured right down into the heaven of heavens—the grass—or what he calls the cut-’em-down countries.” Our writer never clearly defined what he meant by the “heaven of heavens,” but he is generally understood to mean what we now call *par excellence* “The Shires,” in which expression the counties of Leicester, Rutland, West Lincoln, and North Northampton are included. This latter is the country hunted by the Pytchley.

Few packs are better known, and no other has yet had to fix certain of its meets at abnormally early hours in the hope of lessening the enormous crowd which appears at those gatherings. In my experience these meets are only equalled in size by those of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, where five hundred horsemen and as many carriages is no uncommon sight. But there is room for all on the wide moor, and no farmers to complain of damage done to crops—except, indeed, by the deer. I have

* “Handley Cross,” chap. vii., p. 57, original edition.

never attended one of the Pytchley early meets, but I am told that the attendance at them is only little lessened by the earliness of the hour. Perhaps some of the keenest sportsmen wish it were a little earlier, so as to enable them to hunt with the Pytchley *first* and some other pack afterwards, and thus get seven days' hunting in the week. "To hunt six days a week, and talk about it the seventh," was somebody's idea of earthly bliss. As the opportunity of doing so has not come in everybody's way, I may perhaps be allowed to express the opinion that six days a week is *rather* too much. For though the season I tried it—in which, by the way, we had two months without one day's frost—I was perhaps fitter than at any other time in my life, I was drawn a bit fine by March, and, truth to tell, a little inclined to look forward to Sunday, and to remark about three o'clock: "They won't do any more good; anybody going my way?" Whereas in other years it had been: "Going home! oh, no, they're sure to find at so-and-so." In fact, I distinctly recollect one evening, ten years ago, with the H. H. (I wonder if Mr. Arthur Wood does?) when he and I, and possibly one or two more besides the servants, dragged on after a beaten fox till long *after dark*, jumping our fences on the principle of putting all the steam possible on at each, as we could not possibly see what they were. The "beaten fox" beat us all the same. But I have got a long way from the Pytchley, and must "try back."

At the time I write of the Pytchley were, and still are, hunted by a Goodall, to how many members of

which family have I not cause to be thankful for good sport shown? The day was a Friday, but, nevertheless, I fancy the meet was larger than those on a Saturday in Kildare, the biggest fox-hunting gatherings I had then seen. It is unnecessary for me to chronicle those who were present, even if I knew them all. Suffice it to say that the beard of the Red Earl was our *oriflamme* that day.

The meet was at Brington, and the draw Nobottle Wood. Hounds soon began to run in covert. A stranger in the land, I had nothing to guide me but instinct, and that took me, almost by myself, to a quiet down-wind corner facing a church and forge.

I had hardly been there two minutes when the fox broke within fifty yards of me. After letting him cross the lane to my left, I tallied him away. Goodall promptly came to my halloa, and no doubt hardly noticed the stranger in the gray frock-coat, whom he thanked for the information necessary to enable him to lay on his hounds.

I hugged myself at the idea of the excellent start I had got, for hounds ran fast, and a lot of the field were slipped. Alas! it was not to be my luck to participate in a real good thing. In less than ten minutes heads went up, just short of the Weedon Road, and a swing round proved that they had over-run the line, which had ended in a drain two fields back.

Some time was given up to an unsuccessful effort at eviction—a policy one would hardly expect Lord Spencer to favour. English eviction, however, is

well known to be a different thing from Irish ; and on this occasion vulpine eviction proved a failure.

We had a longish trot before we again heard hounds. Very unexpectedly they crossed the line of a travelling fox on East Haddon Hill, and, passing the very spot where the victim of a horrible murder has since been found (was it not by a whip of this very pack, and by a fox-terrier of the Master's?), we clattered down the road to the railway arch at Althorp Park station.

Hounds had slipped away so suddenly that it was some time ere the long cavalcade on the high-road became aware of the fact, and in that procession I was rather near the tail. Consequently, my start this time was as bad as it had been good the first.

Being a stranger in the land, I am a little doubtful if I give the points correctly. Was it Althorp station where we first crossed the line? All I know is that hounds ran fast, twice crossing the line to the southward, and once back again under a culvert to the north side, but it was not till we left this always unpleasant accompaniment to fox-hunting that I got fairly on terms with the pack, then fleeting mutely up a bank covered with small enclosures divided by big fences.

Church Brampton was the name of the village on that bank, I believe, but we left it a little to the right. The fox was pointing towards the dark woods of Harlastone, and fast as hounds ran, he beat them there and saved his brush. But for the good start.

he had and the doubles at the railway line, he would probably never have got there.

Five-and-thirty minutes was the time from the find; and though, truth to tell, I have seen faster, and the country was probably the worst in the hunt, I was quite satisfied with my first gallop with this celebrated pack.

CHAPTER XXII.

SPRING WOODCOCK SHOOTING IN GERMANY.

ONCE again the season of the spring migration of the woodcock has come round, and at the time I write the poulterers' shops here in Germany are crowded with the toothsome longbills. This spring migration is neglected by English sportsmen, or rather the woodcock is protected by law after the first* of March. The Germans are wiser in this matter, and understanding that the woodcock, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, is a visitor, afford him protection in their game laws only in May and June.

"Occuli" Sunday, as it is here called (otherwise the third Sunday in Lent), is considered to mark the time on and after which the birds may be expected. For this reason the woodcock are frequently spoken of here as "Occuli." As a matter of fact an early Easter, such as we had this year, rather puts the calculation out, but the first birds are generally killed in the Rhineland about the 10th of March, and the best bags made from that till the end of the month.

The method pursued is of course the somewhat uninteresting one of waiting at certain well-known spots towards evening. The birds are capricious in

* Perhaps not. The permission to shoot in March and April at all opens a door to irregularities with respect to other game.

their habits—sometimes beginning to arrive as soon as the sun is gone, at others delaying till it is almost too dark to shoot them.

In the method of their flight they are equally uncertain ; some days they come steadily on, but on others they twist and dodge about in the manner with which all sportsmen are so familiar. Still, you generally get some shooting if you are in one of the well-known good places, and with luck may count on from three to seven couple in an evening, that is in less than an hour. The natives, to do them justice, are not very selfish in keeping the knowledge of the good places to themselves, for, truth to tell, the ordinary German sportsman finds *scolopax* a little difficult shooting. His ideal is the hare, which affords a good big mark, and, if sitting, why, so much the better. Thus the Britisher has a good chance to show whether he can hold straight, if he has only exercised a little diplomatic courtesy to the tenants of neighbouring shootings beforehand.

This particular year* has been considerably below the average in this matter of the spring woodcock flight. The German sporting press attributes this to the severe winter in the Adriatic, and not without a show of reason, as the following argument will prove. They say one of the favourite winter haunts of the woodcock is the Illyrian and Dalmatian coast, and when the winter is not too hard there, large quantities of woodcock remain there, as is proved by the enormous bags—three to four hundred head in a day—frequently made on that coast. The woodcock who

* Written 1893.

spend the winter there return north by the line of the Rhine, and thus provide a good year for the "*Schnepfen strich*" (woodcock migration). On the other hand, when the winter in the Adriatic is severe (and the exceptional severity of the weather this year, when Trieste was literally cut off from both land and sea communication by a terrific snowstorm and blizzard, will be recollected by the reader) the woodcock moves further to the south-eastward. When this occurs the principal flight would seem to return by the east of Europe, and so the birds are less numerous in this district. Where the woodcock go to under these circumstances to spend the winter it would be difficult to say, but I may remark that they are known to visit the Himalayas and Indian hills generally as far south as the Nilghéeries in Madras. Woodcock have been stated to have occurred in the Ceylon hills, but the statement lacks authentic confirmation, and as an old Ceylon sportsman I shall take leave to doubt it. At any rate, wherever they go when the winter is severe in the Adriatic, experience points to the fact that they are not returning this year in their usual numbers by this route.

There is a fascination in the woods at sunset—to me at least. Just after the sun is gone I take up my stand at my favourite post. To my right front lies a pond, formed by the damming of a lovely valley, which terminates just before me in a fringe of marshy ground. My position is not lacking in strategical advantages, for while I am hidden from the left and rear by a great rock, I am covered on my right by a

couple of young firs. There is a handy place for a seat, too, so I lay my fringed game-bag on it and sit down. The woods are alive with song, thrushes and smaller birds all uttering their last notes for the day. The woodcock are late to-night. The shadows deepen over the valley; but I could still see to shoot on the ground. At last a peculiar sound—something between a whistle and a quack—reaches my ear, and a woodcock sweeps over a line of firs to my left, only to fall with a splash into the edge of the pond. The next one comes rather low and I miss him, but before I can reload two more appear, and I get one with the left barrel. A few minutes afterwards several come together, but I only get one chance, and that one I bag. A little later I get another, and before I can get the gun down another. Then a miss, and so it goes on.

At last it is nearly dark, but I can just see another against the sky, and miss him. Though I cannot say I really see him still, I know his line and speed, and I fire again, and to the shot follows a splash at the far end of the pond—a fluky ending to my evening's sport. Now I proceed to collect my bag, a proceeding attended with a good deal of difficulty and some burning of matches. At last I have six birds, and now for the one on the pond. Fortunately, the last waning light on the water shows him up in some rushes, but I have to cut a sapling ash and fish for some time before I can get him.

Now to put my best foot foremost to get home in time to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEER-SHOOTING.

THE title of this paper will sufficiently define its scope to a sportsman's mind. As, however, these pages appeal equally, I hope, to the general reader, it may be as well for me to remark at the commencement that the method of deer-shooting known to sportsmen as "deer-stalking" is excluded from this article. It has been my fate in many lands to have to stalk both deer and antelopes, and sometimes when not only my own dinner, but that of my servants also, depended upon successful stalking and straight shooting. I must, however, honestly admit that of deer-stalking *par excellence*, that is, Scotch deer-stalking, I know nothing, except from books. Nor, I may say, do I greatly care to do so. Fascinating as the sport must have been in the days of St. John,* it seems now to have very greatly degenerated. The sportsman is placed in charge of a professional stalker, who allows him no voice as to the method of approaching the deer. "Follow me and do as I do," is all he deigns to say,

* Not the Evangelist, but the author of "Wild Sports of the Scottish Highlands."

and the sportsman has to run or crawl, lie still, advance, or retire without knowing anything about what is going on till the cocked rifle is put into his hands, and he is told to look over the rock or hillock which covers him and fire. I think about that time I should feel inclined to let the stalker shoot too. How can this be called sport? The only part the stranger takes is firing at a stag who is standing still. Then he goes back to London and says he has been deer-stalking. He would, I dare say, be puzzled to say which way the wind blew the day he shot his stag. No, I maintain this is not true sport, or rather that the only sportsmanlike capability is shown by the gillie. The man who fires the shot could display more of it by making a good score at the "running deer" target at Bisley. If, however, he falls into the hands of a stalker who will explain the object of all his manœuvres, he may learn much. Having learnt it, let him, if he can afford it, take a forest, and stalk his stag alone, pitting his science against the animal's cunning timidity. He will then learn the delight only to be felt by the sportsman who stands over his dead game and can say, "Alone I did it." Or, if his purse be unequal to the cost involved in this, there are still places in Europe where stalking may be obtained for the asking. Iceland and Norway, but both rarely now, offer reindeer. The mountains of the south of Europe contain various forms of wild goats and sheep, generally miscalled Ibex. Sardinia and Corsica are easily accessible, so are the Pyrenees, though they are nearly shot out. The Sierra Nevada in Spain

contains a good many, the Atlas still more, and that will soon be open to sportsmen. Crete and Cyprus are also available. Newfoundland, again, is not more than a week's journey, and there the cariboo still roam in considerable numbers. Having commenced by saying I would not write about stalking, I have already said too much on the subject.

What, then, are the methods of shooting deer other than stalking? I recognise three, viz. : driving them with beaters, hunting them with hounds, and baying them with a dog, and then creeping in. The last is best known as the means whereby the elk is principally brought to hand in Sweden, but it is a method of deer-shooting with which I am not familiar, though I have made use of this plan to kill lynx and wild boar.

There remain, then, two legitimate methods, for I do not look upon the practice of "calling" stags in the rutting season as anything but rank poaching, though it is greatly practised on the Continent. Of these I will take driving first. I have in previous chapters spoken of driving sambur and other deer in India, and axis deer on the West Coast of Ceylon, so I will not refer to that, but proceed at once to the sport as practised in the coffee districts of that island.

My first experience of this was when I formed that very insignificant item in the garrison of Kandy, the junior subaltern. We were asked to drive out to a coffee district some twenty miles off for a ball. What, unless the pure instinct of hospitality, prompted the invitation I cannot say, for we were all bachelors,

and at a planters' ball there are normally about twelve dancing men to each lady, without bringing over half-a-dozen more.

A few days before the dance I met the particular young planter to whose hospitable roof I was assigned for the occasion. We were both driving in different directions, and he only shouted without pulling up: "Bring your guns on Wednesday." I had not the least idea what the sport was likely to be, but put a variety of cartridges in my box.

The ball was as cheery as most planters' dances are, and it was long after daylight before we broke up. It was evident that we shouldn't do any shooting that day, in fact, the sun was low when we assembled for a very late tiffin. Our exercise was confined to a stroll through the coffee, and it was not till after dinner that our host informed us of his plans for the next day.

"The elk (sambur) have been playing the deuce in my guinea-grass field lately, and there must be a lot of them about. My coolies say they generally lie in the big *patana** at the other end of the estate. So I propose we have a lot of the coolies out and drive it to-morrow. We ought to get several."

I need hardly say the rest of us—another planter, a brother officer, and myself—gladly assented. I was sorry he had not been more explicit before, as I should have brought a rifle instead of a gun.

It was with an effort that we kept awake long

* *Patanas* are large natural grass plains, which are interspersed throughout the virgin forest which covers the mountains of Ceylon, or rather did cover them till the coffee-planter appeared on the scene.

enough after dinner to smoke a cheroot. In fact, I think we had all been dozing before we turned in, which we did soon after nine o'clock.

Next morning we were up before the conch-shell sounded to call the coolies to work. After we had disposed of our tea we started for the *patana*, which was many acres in extent, and mostly covered with elephant-grass nearly five feet high. I was accompanied by my two kangaroo hounds, Rajah and Ranee, immensely powerful brutes, used to elk-hunting. They were invaluable when it came to knifing an elk, as they never failed to hold. When the elk turned his head to look at me at my first approach, one of them would seize him with a never-failing grip by the ear. As the brute gave his head a swing to shake off the first dog he exposed the other ear to the second, who was equally sure to improve the opportunity. This enabled me to run in and use the knife with safety. I have even seen them holding a huge boar by the ears, but the brute crashed through the jungle as if their weight was nothing, till I was able to shoot him. In less than half an hour we arrived on our shooting ground. A couple of score of coolies accompanied us to beat. As P—— knew no more about the place from a shooting point of view than we did, we held a council of war. It was decided to beat the leeward side of the *patana* up, and then come back down the other side. We posted ourselves according to our ideas of where we were most likely to get a shot. P—— was opposite me, there being a valley between us, and the other two were further on.

The time wore on, but though I heard the coolies tom-toming, nothing came my way. At last I happened to glance at P——. He was simply dancing with excitement and pointing to the ridge behind me. Ordering the dogs to lie still, I crept through the high grass till I could see. On a knoll about ninety yards off was a banging great sambur hind gazing intently at P——, whom no doubt she thought insane. Though the distance was a little far for a smooth-bore, I took a careful aim and fired. The bullet went true enough, but I had forgotten to allow for the wind, which was pretty strong. Consequently, though I heard the bullet strike, the hind cantered off on three legs, my second barrel missing. The kangaroo hounds, who had come to the shot, got a view and went off in pursuit. Knowing they would be sure to have her I stood fast. A few minutes after a stag and two hinds passed slowly close to P——. They were hidden from him by the high grass, and though I signalled frantically he would not look towards me. At last they got his wind and went off at a gallop, but fortunately towards the other guns. Presently I heard a shot, followed directly by a double shot. In a couple of minutes a single hind came in sight going at top speed, with the two great hounds in hot pursuit, the bitch, who was the faster, leading by many lengths. It was the prettiest course I ever saw, but the dogs gained rapidly on the deer, which, it turned out afterwards, was heavy in calf. As they neared P——, Ranee seized her by the hock, deer and dog rolling over together. Before the hind could rise Rajah had

her by the ear. P—— ran up, but having no knife, was obliged to shoot the hind. Just then the beaters joined us.

We walked down towards the others and learned, as I expected, the dogs had pulled down my wounded hind not far from my brother officer. Just after he had knifed her and driven off the dogs, the other three deer appeared. The young planter killed the stag with one shot. The hinds going across, my chum killed one just as the dogs, coming towards the place where they had heard the last shot fired, sighted them. Then commenced the course, the end of which we had seen. This was a capital beat, each of us had got a deer and we were in high glee.

For the next beat I elected to stand in a piece of jungle adjoining the *patana*, as I had seen the disadvantage of being placed in the long grass. For a long time I saw nothing, though I heard occasional distant shots. At last Ranee raised her head sharply, looking intently at the opposite slope of the jungle. For some time I could see nothing, but the bitch fortunately awaited the signal to move. At last I made out a young sambur stag standing in the thick jungle, nearly, if not quite, a hundred yards off. A sapling partly hid his shoulder from me and the range was extreme. I felt sure, however, that he had seen the dogs and would not give me another chance, so aimed nearly at the top of his shoulder and pulled both triggers. The double heavy charge (there were four drachms and a half in each barrel) from so light a weapon spun me half round, and the dogs started off

at a headlong pace through the jungle. I could see on the tree I have mentioned the white scar where a bullet had taken off the bark, but the stag was gone. I felt a bit disgusted till I saw the hounds begin to worry just where he had been standing. I fought my way through the thorns to them, and there was the stag, stone-dead. He had been shot through the heart, while the other bullet, which had struck the tree, had been deflected into space. So I had reason to be glad I had fired both barrels, though as a rule it is not a practice to be recommended. I waited by the stag till some of the coolies came in sight, when I gave it into their charge and went to join the others. P—— had got another stag, and one of the others a red deer (muntjac). We went home to breakfast in triumph, and that night the coolies held high revel with the flesh.

I may remark that seven deer in a morning's driving is quite a phenomenal result. Besides this there were two sambur missed in the last beat. Altogether I may say that I have never seen this bag equalled in Ceylon.

Some years later it was my fate to spend some weeks with two planters who were partners in a coffee estate in the district of Haldummulla. Situated at a height of about six thousand feet above the sea, the climate of Ouva (as the old Ceylon province was called) is far the finest in Ceylon, the rainfall being less immoderate than in some of the districts, in one of which rain has been recorded on three hundred days in the year.

Ouva was in those days a recently opened-up district, and consequently contained a good deal of game. From its eastern limits unbroken jungles extended to the sea, joining it with the best shooting country in the island. Elephants frequently passed through the plantations, and sambur and muntjac were abundant.

Neither of my hosts was a very keen sportsman, but knowing I was fond of shooting, they got up a number of drives in the neighbouring jungles. We began with those on the estate. The first was a steep triangular piece, of which one of them, R—— by name, took the top and we two others the bottom corners. The coolies had not been long at work beating when I heard a terrific crashing in the jungle, evidently coming my way. I had no doubt at all that it was an elephant, and, as I was only armed with a .450-bore Express, determined to give him a wide berth. The noise was continued. At last there appeared—no elephant, but two or three of those great black monkeys whose name I forget, but which the Cingalese call *wandaras*. Hurling themselves along from branch to branch, they passed me going at a great speed, and accompanied by the noise of breaking branches and shaken leaves I had heard. Of course I did not molest the poor brutes. Although I had of course often seen them before, I had never seen their method of progression when greatly alarmed, and I could not help thinking how enviable it would be to some of our flying trapeze artistes. The beat came to an end without a shot being fired. R—— had seen a

deer, but as he had sat down and laid down his rifle, of course he was not ready till the deer was out of sight.

The next beat was lower down the hill. I was told to walk quietly down a path through the jungle, keeping a little ahead of the beaters. I did so, and for a long time saw nothing, till, turning a corner, I came face to face with a buffalo. My first idea was to jump behind a tree, as my weapon was of course useless for such an animal. I immediately remembered, however, that at such an elevation it could only be a tame buff, so stood still. So did the buffalo. Finally, hearing the beaters going on above, I passed a few yards above it, keeping an eye upon it as it did on me. The beaters did not come quite so far down.

After the beat I mentioned the fact, but was surprised to hear there were no tame buffaloes anywhere near. I should have said it was a cow, and a wild one would hardly have stood so still. Besides, I have never heard of them in Ceylon except within at most 1,500 feet above the sea-level, and this was over 5,000. I can only conclude it was a feral one, and that, having at some time escaped from captivity in one of the Cingalese villages, it had taken to the jungle.

In the third beat a hind sambur was killed by one of the others. We then went home to breakfast.

These beats only took place on Sundays, the day on which we could get the coolies. (Of course we were at least fifty miles from a church.) A few days after it was suggested that we should try the dogs.

These dogs consisted of a few cross-bred terriers and beagles with some native curs from the coolie lines. This time we went up the hill instead of down. One old dog opened almost at once upon a scent and some of the others joined him. As fortunately none of them had any reason for attaching themselves to me, I was able to get on to where I thought I might get a shot. Sure enough a stag sambur broke, going at a great pace down through the coffee. A snap shot rolled him over like a rabbit, but he got up and went off more slowly. It was a great fluke, for, as I afterwards found out, I had only smashed his knee. The next barrel was a miss, and before I could reload, the dogs broke and of course soon had him set up among the trees. Not seeing well how I could knife him there, I shot him through the back of the neck, which of course finished him.

As we were going homewards our "pack" commenced to bay violently on the bank of a wooded ravine.

"Panther, I'll bet," said I, and ran round till I got above them. I peered over the edge rifle in hand, but soon jumped back, for there on the ledge not two feet below was a huge cobra, erect on his coils with the well-known hood inflated. Some feet below him were the frantic hounds, all baying and barking. I ran back and called to the others to send me a shot gun, which they did. Returning to my former post of vantage I blew the brute's head off. This is the only time I ever saw dogs act in this way towards a snake; their instinct generally leads them to avoid the

dangerous reptile, though I once had an imported English terrier killed by a cobra, which he had attacked and killed.

The next place where I saw deer-driving carried out was in the Island of Mauritius. The plan of action was identical with that which I have already described, but an enormous number of coolies from the neighbouring sugar estates were employed as beaters. The deer were a small spotted variety, but the time that has elapsed since then makes it impossible for me to say if they were identical with the Indian axis. I think, however, this was the case. I must honestly confess I never shot one, or, indeed, shot at one, though I assisted at several drives. On each occasion there were at least two dozen guns—officers, planters, and civilians. As the biggest bag, as far as I can recollect, amounted to three deer in one day, the odds were eight to one against one's killing a buck—does were very properly not shot. I was not in Mauritius long enough to get much knowledge of the matter, but I was given to understand that the deer, which are carefully preserved, are never shot in any other way than in these great drives. My informant also said that, owing to the dense nature of the jungle, it was impossible to shoot them in any other way—a statement which I was inclined to doubt, and had opportunity served I would have tested practically. As there are no large carnivora, nor indeed any large animals except the deer, in the Mauritius, it is difficult to understand why there should be such a small

head of deer. But this, I was also informed, was the case.

Driving deer is a recognised method of proceeding in the Highlands of Scotland, but it is only practised in very large forests, or by arrangement between several shooting tenants, as it disturbs the deer so. Naturally no one wishes to drive the deer off their own forest for others to shoot at.

On the Continent of Europe it is much more commonly practised, but deer *only* are rarely the object of a drive, which generally includes hares and foxes also. I have already referred to these drives in my chapter on "Roe-deer Shooting."

I now turn to the last method of deer-shooting, included in the scope of this chapter. Here, again, the chapter just referred to greatly bars my way, as it treats also of this method—*i.e.*, that in which the deer are found and hunted by hounds until they pass within shot of one of the guns. This is also a method made use of in the south of the United States. Personally, I have never seen any other deer than the roe so killed abroad, but it was once my singular good fortune to participate in such a day's fallow-deer shooting in England. The locality on this occasion was the New Forest, more identified with hunting than shooting in most people's minds.

Officially speaking, there are no deer in this forest. Many years ago an Act of Parliament was passed, ordering the destruction of all the deer in the Crown Forests of England. This order was stringently

carried out. My readers will probably recollect Gilbert White's interesting account of the removal of the deer from Woolmer Forest, while the spot known as "the Slaughter" on the Wye between Ross and Monmouth marks the place where thousands of the Dean Forest deer perished miserably, mute witnesses to the miserable weakness of a Government which could not protect its own property. Like these two forests the New Forest was soon emptied of all its sylvan inhabitants. But though the two former still remain without deer, the New Forest is restocked. The fact is that within the limits of the Forest proper and all around it were, and are still, large woods, which, being private property, were not subject to the operations of the Act. In these woods a certain number of deer sheltered, and when the activity of their persecutors ceased they returned to the Forest.

I estimate the stock there now at five hundred head of fallow-deer at the very least, with about a score of red and a few, very few, roe-deer. To check their increase two methods are employed. Firstly, there are the New Forest Deerhounds, which pack annually accounts for about seventy deer. Secondly, there are the forest-keepers, who, with their chief, who manages the Forest for the Crown, shoot at least as many more. It was to this gentleman's courtesy I was indebted for a day's doe-shooting one winter morning some years ago.

Accompanied by a groom, mounted like myself on a polo pony, I turned up at the Queen's House, Lyndhurst, on the 10th of February, 18—, about

ten o'clock. I found my host with his rifle slung over his back ready to mount his pony. He took no groom with him, but in a case on his saddle-bow was a leaden weight (some five or six pounds, perhaps) connected to the pony's bit by a stout strap. All he had to do when he jumped off was to throw the weight on the ground, and the pony was thus prevented from running far.

"When they are used to it," said he, "they never try to move off. It is a hawking dodge."

Now he is a mighty falconer, and the author of the "Badminton" Book on that sport.

We trotted smartly on to the place of rendezvous, where two or three forest-keepers were awaiting us. They had with them the hounds, consisting of an old slow foxhound, drafted from the local deerhounds, and a bloodhound bitch.

One of the keepers reported having seen deer just before he joined us, so the hounds were taken to the spot and laid on there while we rode quietly through the wood. Presently my host cantered off to the left. I kept straight on.

In less than five minutes I saw a half-grown doe coming straight towards me, but, of course, I allowed it to pass unscathed. The old foxhound soon followed on the line, but as just then I heard the bloodhound on another line I rode on. This second line pointed apparently to some high ground known, I believe, as Boldrewood, and thither I galloped, only to find my host had preceded me. He gave up his place to me and went on nearly to the high-road above.

Shortly afterwards I heard him fire, and then the hounds turned towards me. The first doe which crossed the ride bit the dust, but the second chose the moment of reloading and escaped with the hounds in hot pursuit. Eventually, however, they lost her, and we did not get another shot. My host had killed his deer as it was going through the bushes bordering the road. This ended my experience of a method of fallow-deer shooting which can be seen nowhere else in England, nor, I think, in the whole world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GRIND WITH THE GRAFTON.

IT is not because I have no memories of smart gallops with this well-known pack that I have preferred to recall a run of the other sort—a long and severe one, trying both to horse and man. It so happens, however, that my old diaries record more than one of this latter kind. Such were the two Mondays within a month when the meet on each occasion was at Adstone. Each time, too, we had a run of less than an hour in the morning. On both occasions *the* run began at two, the first ending with “Who-whoop! gone to ground,” at Maidford at four-thirty. But of this I can only claim to have been “in” the first half, owing to want of condition in my second horse—a new one. On the second we ran fast for an hour and five minutes, and then checked and probably changed foxes. In ten minutes we were running again, and ran on till the fox fairly ran us out of scent a little to the south of Morton Pinkney. This run was also two hours and a half.

Then there was the time when, after a hot and uninteresting day in the woodlands of Yardley Chase, we got away in the evening with a game old dog-fox,

who led us a pretty dance, over baked and dusty fallows and grass nearly as hard, by Denton and Horton, till he died in the brook at Preston Deanery, half the field up at the finish consisting of Lord Penrhyn and members of his family. This run lasted just two hours.

But the particular grind I have in my mind was longer and faster than any of these—stop, though! I am beginning at the wrong end of my story.

Again it was a Monday, and Fawsley was the meet. Now it so happened that the year, which was nearly out, had been one of the wettest on record, and the country rode terribly deep. The week had been one of gales and rain, and the wind was still high as we trotted along to covert. Fawsley, however, is convenient for the Weedon contingent as well as for some of the Warwickshire men. Consequently the muster of sportsmen and sportswomen to meet Smith and the Grafton lady pack was a biggish one. Although the Pytchley had been thereabouts on the previous Saturday, Sir Rainald Knightley (since raised to the Peerage) had a fox ready for us in the Fawsley Woodyard, which ran first through some more of the coverts lying on the steep slope of the park.

Now mark the advisability of not knowing too much. Fawsley is a meet not noted for sport, and it has come to be a saying in the country that "any horse will do for Fawsley." I, however, was at this time new to the district, and consequently had out *two*, and those my best. Verily I had my reward.

As they reach the hill-top the wind is in our faces,

and the bitches began to run hard. Through Badby Wood we go, hearing a halloa on by the village. For once it is a relief to get on the road—not the “’ard ’igh road” to-day. Hounds run up Studboro’ Hill. Now, here is an earth, and some hounds mark at it. Before it can be well investigated we hear another halloa—still on.

Catesby is soon left behind, and near Catesby House, “Brooksby” comes to grief over a wired fence. However, we see him on his feet though his horse is gone; so we press on.

“No account of this run in *The Field*,” remarks somebody, but he was wrong, for before we reach Dane Hole our chronicler is with us again. Between this covert and Shuckburgh Hill we have some “intricate leps,” as they say the other side of St. George’s Channel, but as most of the field have taken a wrong turn half a mile back, we have lots of room to pick our places and get safely over.

Up one side of the hill and down the other we go, our fox pointing as if for Napton. We are now in the North Warwickshire country. Somebody tells me we are entering a biggish bit of country. I look round for my second horseman—of course in vain.

Our fox has no heart for these big grass fields either, but turns short back past Lower Shuckburgh, and reascends the hill to Shuckburgh House. We have been running over three-quarters of an hour and cannot press our horses up this terrific ascent. As we come out of the shrubbery, however, we meet the bulk of the field. They have stopped a single

hound, which was running back, but, strange to say, not one of them has viewed the fox.

I view something, however, that causes me as great—perhaps greater—pleasure, and that is my second horse. Rapidly as the change is effected, hounds are running hard again before I am ready.

We are to have the three-mile gallop to Catesby back again, on a line parallel to that by which we came. The ground is deeper than ever—the fences as nasty. I saw one sportsman engulfed in a narrow drain, and heard afterwards that it took an hour to get his horse out. Still it is for'rard, for'rard! Catesby is past, and Badby Village and Badby Wood is reached again. Our fox is, of course, too hot to dwell in the covert, but slips out at the bottom end and crosses the valley. By Miller's Farm he turns short back, keeping still to the east of the valley. I think if I had known what a big place that was that the Huntsman gave me a lead over there I should have gone to look elsewhere. Ignorance, however, takes the place of daring, and the good gray gives a kick back that leaves the gulf-like drain well behind us.

Again our fox turns back short of Newnham Village. No one, however, can chronicle all the short turns of a beaten fox, nor would they form interesting reading. Suffice it to say we cross the Nene (if it is the Nene that flows by Badby) several times.

At last the fox, who has already once been coursed in view, turns again for Badby Wood. He cannot face the hill, however, but betakes himself into a network of cottage gardens and paddocks, where we

cannot follow. We have to clatter up the village street, and turn in, in more or less military order, through the arched gateway of a farmyard. As we file in we become aware that our fox is at bay. Phenomenal occurrence! But not in the open, dear reader, but under a moveable hen-house on wheels, where no foxhound can creep in. The young Master and some willing assistants jump off. The hen-house—which, I daresay, had often paid toll to our quarry—is raised; and the pack dash in upon their victim.

What a scene! The great house and its bearers are swayed hither and thither, till there seems some chance of its falling and crushing the hounds. More assistance is forthcoming, however, and Smith is able to seize his fox and carry it out to the paddock behind, where it turns out to be—no *he* at all, but a remarkably fine old vixen, who had stood up before hounds just two hours and fifty minutes.

The last honours are paid her, and on inquiry I am told I am fourteen miles from home. Anyhow, hounds will do no more. The amusing chat of one of our best known jockeys shortens my journey as far as Weedon.

Good-bye to the Grafton! Leicestershire, I believe, calls them “provincial,” and even their Pytchley neighbours patronise. Nevertheless, if not the rose, they are near the rose, and no man who goes to them for sport will fail to get it.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

THE 24th of August seems destined to be linked with memories of slaughter. For ages it has been remembered in connection with the Massacre of the Huguenots. Nowadays in Germany it is associated with very different bloodshed—being the day fixed by law for the opening of the shooting season for partridges, pheasants, quail, and hares.

As a matter of fact, however, there is practically no pheasant-shooting done so early in the year; and on many preserves hares are also given an additional three weeks' grace, in consideration of their breeding operations not having ceased at the earlier date. So it is really looked upon as the opening day of the shooting season for partridges and quail.

Not many years ago I found myself in Southern Germany on the date in question, and resident, moreover, with a typical German sportsman. Now it may be prejudice on my part, but I must admit that the German sportsman—as a sportsman—is not by any means an object of admiration to me. In certain types of woodcraft they are undoubtedly far in advance of us. But for dogmatic self-assertion and confidence

in their own superiority they are hard to beat. My companion on this particular 24th was, moreover, spoiled by a local reputation as the best shot of the neighbourhood. As I found out later on he was quite the most jealous shot it has ever been my bad fortune to meet. His shooting would in England have been considered fair to moderate, but his own faith in it was quite unbounded. On one occasion I was giving him some idea of English grouse-driving, and of the performances of such shots as Lords de Grey and Walsingham on those occasions. His only comment was: "Ah! I used to shoot much better before my recent illness," the obvious inference being that he considered himself on a par with the sportsmen whose names I had just mentioned. Fortunately I was behind him, for I had to laugh.

That he looked upon all game as so much in pocket was rather the result of the German system than his own fault. The outlay required to rent decent shooting there is so absurdly small that a class of people, who would never think of having shooting of their own in England, attend on the occasions when the communal shootings are put up to auction. For his best shooting, H—— (that was his name) paid three pounds a year, and Government found the keeper. This shooting (it was 550 acres of woodland) yielded in one winter twenty-seven foxes, for the skins of which H—— obtained four shillings each, besides a few roe-deer, and badgers, and a good head of hares. The fox-skins alone nearly paid the rent twice over, and other expense there was none, except that he

paid one pound for the keeper's game license. It will thus be seen that for a decent shot to rent shootings is quite a profitable business in Germany. It is, however, only fair to point out that whereas the shootings are let for a period of six or nine years, as there is no clause in the lease about leaving a fair head of game at the end of the tenure, the first two years can only be looked upon as dead loss. The outgoing tenant invariably shoots off everything he can find during his last season, for the simple reason that he may be outbid at the coming auction. Nevertheless H—— made his shootings pay very well.

To return, however, to this particular "opening day." Germans are proverbially early risers, and to this rule H—— was no exception. We left the house soon after seven, accompanied by H——'s liver-coloured pointer, which, though rather coarse-headed, would not have been a bad-looking dog had not the senseless German fashion condemned him to the loss of several inches of the tip of his tail. At the edge of the beat (some twenty minutes' walk), the *Waldhüter*, or woodward, met us. He was accompanied by a dog, which no Englishman would ever have taken for a pointer. In fact, he would have passed muster as a poor specimen of a bloodhound. In colour he was a rich red tan without a white spot. He had the large wrinkled head, long silky ears, and hanging jowl of a bloodhound, and his frame was on a scale little, if at all, smaller. Like that of the liver dog, his appearance was spoiled by a docked tail. I was assured he belonged to the purest race of old German pointers, and,

as the event proved, his nose was perfect, even if his breaking left something to be desired. I need hardly say that such a heavy, lumbering animal was tired out long before noon.

The brown dog was let go alone. As we were not to shoot hares, he began by finding four right off, all of which he stood staunchly enough. Some time had elapsed before the dog ran right over a single partridge which I dropped with a long shot. Of course, the dog rushed in to retrieve, and thereby flushed the rest of the covey out of shot. However, it was clear they had not gone far, and following them up we came upon them on a grassy bank. As before, the dog over-ran them, and they rose a bit wild, H—— killing one, while mine, I regret to say, went off with a leg down. Again we followed them up, and again the brown dog made a mess of it, bounding right amongst the covey which were lying in a lucerne patch. Nobody got a shot this time, and the covey went back to where we had first seen them. The dog was evidently too wild, and after a thrashing he was taken up, and the other loosed.

When we got back to the hillock where we had first found them, the red dog drew very steadily up to a dead point in some high lucerne. This time they rose beautifully and we both had a brace. The dog disgraced himself in spite of his good point by running forward and barking loudly at the sound of the gun. This time it was his turn for correction. The liver dog retrieved the birds well, and while he was doing so he put up my wounded bird of the time before, but

out of shot, and it went back. In the hopes of getting it we turned back once more, and this time the dog made a capital point on a brambly bank. Out flew my friend with the leg down, and I followed up a bad miss with a clean kill with the left barrel. Almost before it touched ground the dog retrieved it.

Even German sportsmen are beginning to acknowledge that retrieving pointers are a mistake. Over and over again I have said, "I want to see the dog who will wait for the word to retrieve," and the only answer has been a laugh or a shrug of the shoulders. Even the good dogs invariably run in when a bird drops, with the natural result that for one man to kill four or five birds out of a covey is impossible. You may get your first brace, but the dog takes care that that chance is your last—for the time at any rate.

The retrieving of hares, especially of wounded hares, is also greatly responsible for bad dogs. Even a good sportsman is tempted, when he sees a hare roll over and then go slowly away, to let go his retriever, forgetting that he will expect the same dog to stand stock still in five minutes, while another hare, perhaps shot at and missed, goes away. Ten to one there is another chase and a thrashing to follow. But as I have said, in this respect only the Germans are beginning to see that we are right. The craze for English pointers was the thin end of the wedge. In a few years the retrieving pointer will only be found among the peasant-sportsmen (*Bauernjäger*) and a few conservatives of the old school.

I look upon it as a great step made that we have

in one point succeeded in persuading the Germans to adopt our practice. In my opinion, and no doubt in all English sportsmen's opinion, there are a number of points in which they may well be content to do the same. Chief among these I would commend to their notice our practice of not shooting stags in the rutting season. On this, and on the practice of calling roebucks at the same period, I have elsewhere animadverted. The latter practice I do not, however, ever expect to see abandoned. There is some excuse for it. Roebucks are at all times difficult animals to stalk, and have very sound ideas on the subject of driving, and on the advisability of breaking back through the line of beaters rather than face the silent danger in front. Moreover the rutting season does not appreciably affect the flavour or quality of the meat as it undeniably does in the stag.

From German practice the English gunner can also learn much. Especially is this the case with regard to close times. Not only the roe, but also the hare, is well protected in Germany. What is also especially admirable is the practice of distinguishing between the male and female in the close times. Thus a female roe has eight close months to the buck's two, and in some parts, Wurtemberg for instance, it is illegal to kill a doe at all. Again, a black-cock only gets two and a half months' close time, while the gray hen is protected throughout the year—an arrangement equally good for the sportsman and the game.

To return, however, to our sport. This covey being pretty well used up, we started off to find

another, which we did on the edge of a vineyard. Only those who have shot in a wine country understand what a nuisance vines are to sportsmen. Indeed, during September it is illegal even to run a dog through them, whilst all game, and especially partridges, enjoy their cool shade during the day. The covey, as I have said, got up wild at the edge of the vineyard, and dropped further back in the vines. We ran the dog through, with the only result that they got up and again settled among the grapes. The next trial was more lucky. Three came out to the left, where I was posted, the nearest giving a long shot, and I dropped him. This time the red dog retrieved all right, though mouthing the bird rather badly. The bulk of the covey had pitched in an adjoining potato-field, and thither we proceeded. First a single bird got up, and I dropped him in the act of popping over the hedge, a high nut one. Then the covey rose and I got two more. H——, who was behind a pear-tree, could not get a shot. I should have got another with my own gun, but that was in England, and I was using an old-fashioned hammer 16-bore. The result was before I could finish reloading a late bird got up and joined his friends, keeping me between himself and H——. The red dog was rushing about wildly and barking again. After he had been corrected once more and taken up, we followed up the remainder of the covey, which had settled in one end of a standing oat-crop, the other end of which some men were mowing. From these we asked permission to walk through the corn, which was granted civilly enough.

At the end of the patch the brown dog stood steadily, and the birds rose and went into the wood to the right, H——, who alone could shoot, getting a brace. At his last shot a bird rose near me and I dropped it.

“Quail, I think,” I said as I reloaded.

“No, partridges,” was the answer. This was a fair example of H——’s dogmatism. I thought if it was a partridge it must indeed be a “cheeper.” I walked forward and picked it up, when it turned out, as I expected, to be a common quail, and the first I had ever shot in Europe. That H—— never thought of apologising for his flat contradiction goes without saying.

Some little time elapsed before we again found birds. The brown dog stood in a potato patch, and on my going up to him out went a diminutive leveret. In a minute he stood again, and this time there was a wild grab and a squeak as I approached, and the leveret was done for.

We found our next covey in some lucerne. They got up badly, and H—— missed altogether, while I feathered mine. Very unsatisfactory, but we had a fairly good mark, and in a few minutes the dog commenced to draw on them at the end of a long strip of potatoes. The first bird that rose I had, H—— getting a brace out of the main covey. My borrowed gun nearly lost me a late bird, but I just managed to get the breech shut and drop it.

When the keeper had got the birds we worked on through the patch. Presently the dog made a steady point, but directly afterwards left it, sidled a yard or two through the potatoes, and stood again.

“Quail,” said H——.

Those who are not used to quail-shooting would not believe how invisibly they can run. The dog worked them backwards and forwards till at last he came almost up to me. I could not discern any movement in front of him, but trusting him, kicked a thick piece of the stuff, and *piep! piep!* out went a brace of quail, and I had both. Four quail killed and one missed was the result of that patch.

So we worked on till it was time to knock off for lunch. German sportsmen rarely carry food, as every inn can be relied upon for at least smoked sausage, or ham, cheese, and good bread and butter. After our feed in the *wirthshaus*, we worked on till the sun was getting low on the sky.

“Well,” said H——, “I think I shall knock off. There is a bit of the boundary over there where the hares ought to be shot, if you’re not tired, or perhaps you’d like to have another try for that buck.”

After some discussion it was settled that I should do both. Accordingly, towards sunset I made my way towards the keeper’s cottage to exchange my gun for the rifle. Armed with this and the indispensable *jagd-stock*, or sitting-stick, I started for the wood.

“That buck,” as H—— called him, was an animal who had been sentenced to death on account of his habit of working on and about the frontier, which made H—— fear his neighbour might get him. Accordingly, I had sat up for him four or five times in succession till the toads crawled out of the dead

leaves, a certain indication of nightfall. Before his sentence he had always been running between the keeper's legs. Now he seemed to have entirely disappeared. Still, I was willing to have one more try. Half an hour before dark I reached the wood. The *wechsel*, or well-trodden game-path, runs between the stems of some thirty-year-old firs. First wetting my finger to ascertain the direction of the wind, I plant my seat between two big trees and a beech bush. I then turn up my collar, put on gloves, and sit down. When one green branch is bent aside to form a loop-hole my shelter is complete. It is very quiet in the wood to-night. Some jays fly into the trees above, and disturb the silence by dropping branches or fir-cones. Then they are still.

An old hare comes running out of the fir-wood. On these occasions their pace is quite different from their usual hopping gait. This one passes me within six or seven feet, sits up a bit, and then goes on into the beech covert. The wood-hares, as Jefferies named them, never leave the woods, but seek their food on the grassy forest roads, and later on in the bramble bushes.

It is getting dark now ; in five minutes it will be too late to see the ivory-tipped foresight.

Hark ! two or three warning clucks from a black-bird over on the opposite slope. Something is moving in the wood. Presently the noisy bird scurries off with a shriek, and a woodpigeon flaps heavily out from one of the outer firs. I pull my cap low down over my eyes so that the last glint of daylight shall

not bother me, and peer through the firs. Something is moving. No—yes! it is a roe. Buck or doe is now the question, for the close time for the latter lasts till October. As it passes between those two firs I catch the light on its head. Horns! Instinctively the rifle begins to go up. I glance down to see that it clears the green branches in front, and bring it up to my porthole. Five-and-twenty yards to my front is a gap between two trees, where the light strikes down right to the moss.

The buck moves fearlessly along at a slow walk. Not much allowance required for movement to-day. I sight the middle of the shoulder-blade. Crack! the buck gives a bound and lies kicking. Before I reach him he is dead. I pull him away some yards from the game-path and proceed to gralloch him, wondering as I do so for how much money sportsmen would undertake the butcherly job on a sheep which they so readily do on a deer. At last it is finished. Drawing out the extensor tendon of a foreleg above the knee, I pass the other leg through it, which enables me to hang him on a stout fir-branch, out of foxes' reach. I hang my shooting seat beside him and stumble through the now dark wood till I reach the high-road, when I put my best foot foremost. Stopping at the keeper's to bid him go for the buck at dawn, I reach home after eight. A long day, but this is the result—twenty-seven partridges, seventeen quail, three hares, and a roebuck. The buck was a small one with only four points—probably a two-year-old.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BUCK-SHOOTING IN CENTRAL INDIA.

As the tourist is whirled—not too rapidly—across the great Indian peninsula in the train, the commonest object of wild life which he will see from the railway-carriage window is the buck. Here, there, and everywhere the herds may be seen, generally standing, for the train is now an accustomed sight, and no longer causes alarm. By the term buck, the common Indian antelope, or black-buck, is meant, but in the heading of my chapter I include the Indian gazelle, commonly known as the chikara, or ravine deer. The latter is as common, or perhaps even commoner, than the former, and is even to be seen at times in the cantonment itself. Perhaps I should explain that a cantonment is the area on which a military station stands, with the native bazaar thereunto appertaining, and may be taken as equivalent to our term township.

The Indian antelope, or black-buck, is truly a game-looking animal. As the name imports, the adult males, or rather the oldest of them, are a rich glossy brown-black. The face is quaintly marked by double markings in white, and the spiral horns are long and sharp. It is useless giving any exact

standard for what constitutes a really good pair of horns, and they vary greatly according to the district in which the buck is shot. The neighbourhood of Ferozepore has long been noted for producing the longest horns. The younger bucks are brown in colour, the shade being lighter as the beast is younger, till at last the youngest bucks can only be distinguished from the does, which have no horns, by the presence of those appendages.

The Indian gazelle, or chikara, is a more humble-looking little beast, mouse-brown in colour, with a white belly. Both sexes have horns, which curve slightly backwards. The chikara is far less difficult to stalk than the black-buck, but affords a very small mark. The vital parts are practically contained in a space not much bigger than this book, which, though it may seem a fair mark, is pretty hard to hit at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards, when the whole atmosphere is quivering with heat and "mirage," under the rays of an Indian summer sun.

The best season for buck-shooting is of course the hot weather. Grass and crops being equally absent, buck and chikara can be readily seen and approached—that is, within a couple of hundred yards, after which stalking is necessary. I am speaking now of English territory, for in the Native States all game is much less shy and more easily approached. Terrific as is the power of the Indian sun, I always spent one or two days every week in shooting, and never had cause to regret it, but of course proper precautions must be taken. A sola* hat of Brobdignagian proportions,

* Sola is a kind of pith impervious to the sun's rays.

covering the shoulders as well as the head, blue-tinted spectacles, and a strip of flannel sewn inside the coat to cover the spine, are absolute essentials. Add to this the absolute avoidance of stimulants, except perhaps a little claret and soda with lunch, and the odds are the sportsman will not suffer from exposure to the sun.

There are various ways of stalking buck, but the most usual is the one I am about to describe, and that is with a bullock-cart. The buck are used to seeing these carts about with the natives, and as a rule will allow them to approach, if intelligently driven in a spiral, within a hundred and fifty yards, that is, if they have not been too much shot at. The sportsman should be walking at the far side of the cart, and when he judges the buck will not stand a nearer approach, he must kneel quietly down behind a tree or bush, while the unwieldy vehicle goes creaking and clattering on. It is just possible that if the cart is carefully and intelligently worked round the buck they may approach the sportsman nearer, but as a rule the shot has to be taken at about the range I have named, and frequently unsuccessfully. It is hardly necessary to say that following it up with running shots is absolutely useless, though it is often done. The only result is a considerable extent of country disturbed for nothing.

The weapon to be used for buck-shooting is of course an Express rifle, preferably .450 bore, but anything between .380 and .500 will do. The finest antelope shot I ever knew, who was my companion on

the day I am going to endeavour to give an account of, never used any other weapon but a military Martini-Henry .577—·450 with a solid bullet, and when I recount that I have known him return from a single day's shooting out of a *tonga* (native dogcart), with which he would certainly not get any chance under one hundred and fifty yards, with three buck (antelope and gazelle) and a great bustard, my sporting readers will understand what a very deadly enemy the buck lost when fever carried him off only a year or two ago. Not only is the performance a proof of good shooting, but even more so of ability to judge distance, a very difficult matter on the Indian plains. Yet when the very high trajectory of these rifles and the smallness of the mark are considered, it is obvious that any failure to estimate the distance within a very few yards would ensure a miss.

To come to our day, however. It was about the very hottest of the hot weather, when H——, above referred to, and I agreed to make an expedition in quest of buck, to a district, concerning which his *shikari* had made a good report, some fifteen miles away. There is little hardship at rising at four in the morning in such weather, for it is only at that hour that the heat is at all endurable, so I was quite ready when H—— rattled up in a hired tonga. My quota of ice, soda-water, and lunch was put in, and we were off. Through the silent rows of bungalows we rattled, and then through the equally silent bazaar, and for the next hour and more nodded and dozed on our uncomfortable seats, while the conveyance followed one of

the splendid roads with which British India is so plentifully provided. At last a succession of bumps and jolts told us we had entered upon a country track, and this we followed till the sun was reddening the eastern sky. It was broad day when we reached our destination—a native village. Here the sleepy herdsmen were just beginning to unpen and drive out their herds of curious-looking goats and sheep, exactly in the same way that their forefathers did one—and probably two—thousand years ago. These villages still present the same roughly defensive aspect, clustering as they do round some central keep, that their architects learned when a succession of northern conquerors swept over the land.

H——'s *shikari* came to meet us, and told us he had the two bullock-carts waiting a little way from the village, at the edge of the plain where we were to shoot. We shouldered our rifles and set off. Round the village well were clustered picturesque groups of girls and women, chattering and drawing water, while perched on the walls and trees were flocks of gorgeous peafowl—sacred of course. A short walk brought us to the carts, most primitive structures, with bodies shaped to go over the wheels, and filled for the occasion with a little grass for us to sit on. Wishing one another good luck we parted company.

My cart bumped and rattled along for some time, till at last my servant, who was sitting in front with the driver, leant back and told me he could see two *chikara*. I told him to drive towards them, and when a couple of hundred yards off, I slipped off the cart and



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walked on the far side of it. They were evidently a bit shy and twice moved off too soon. At last I told the driver to try and move them towards me, and dropped down among the thorn-bushes. These were so low I had to lie flat so as not to be seen, and in this position I could see nothing, while the sun, which soon gets strength in May, was fairly roasting me. At last, when I was just beginning to think my cart-man had made a mess of the thing, I saw two pair of horns above the thorns within a hundred yards. A few minutes after an opening in the bushes showed me a shoulder. As to get up would mean to move them, I didn't see how I should get a better chance; so I fired, and to my delight heard the bullet tell. Jumping to my feet, I saw one gazelle bounding off while the other lay kicking. Unfortunately it was a doe, who had paid the penalty for bearing horns. She was soon bundled into the cart, and we proceeded. The next thing we saw was a splendid black-buck attended by a couple of does. Unfortunately they were terribly wild, galloping off before we had got within a quarter of a mile of them. However, he was worth bagging, so I persevered. The second attempt was still more disastrous, for they galloped clean out of sight.

Proceeding across the dusty plain, I shortly afterwards perceived the other bullock-cart and made towards it. H—— had a nice buck chikara, and explained the mystery of the black-buck by telling me he had had a long shot and missed it. No wonder it was so wild. After a drink of cold tea we once more parted

company. Half an hour afterwards I missed a young antelope buck (not black), and then made towards a clump of trees we had fixed on for lunch. Here H—— joined me a little later, he also not having increased his bag.

My experience points to the fact that sport at a temperature of a hundred degrees in the shade or thereabout does not conduce to appetite. Though we were not hungry, the iced claret and soda and subsequent cheroot were pleasant enough, as was the shade of the wild fig-trees we had halted under. Unfortunately one of H——'s bullocks was unfit to proceed, so for the rest of the day we had to work together. We did not see anything for some time, the herdsmen having driven their flocks over the adjacent ground. Presently, however, we were somewhat surprised to hear a shot, and looking back we saw a smart bullock-carriage moving parallel with us. In a few minutes it halted again, and a white-clad figure jumping out ran forward, pointing a gun at something we could not see. However, he did not get a shot, and presently the animal, whatever it was, appeared, and made for a heap of rocks not far from us. Neither of us could make out what it was, but both agreed that if a wild animal, it was one with which we were unacquainted. Presently the sportsman came up to us, and turned out to be a native Mohammedan gentleman. He informed us that he was in pursuit of a mad dog, which had bitten a number of cattle, and begged our help. Accordingly we assisted him in beating out the rocks, but saw no more of the dog.

He then asked us to come to his house, after which he would show us where to find buck, and insisted on our occupying his bullock-carriage whilst he walked beside us.

Before long we arrived at a sort of square fort profusely loopholed. A gate between two flanking towers was unbarred and we drove in. Here we found the usual combination of display and dirt so common among natives, being ushered into a dirty room with some old furniture in it. As soon as we decently could we suggested a fresh start, and the three of us started in a fresh bullock-cart attended by a rabble of dirty servants—all armed of course. I told H—— that we were not likely to do much good like this, and he agreed. Presently our friend bowled over a hare, which, however, went on again. I had lost sight of her, when one of the attendants uttered a yell, and tore off in order to cut the throat of the beast, which he had seen fall. It is of course unlawful for the Mussulman to eat meat which has not been so treated. The animal must be alive, but this is always *supposed to be the case*. The invocation of the name of God is never omitted.

As I had imagined, the buck seemed unwilling to allow themselves to be approached by such a procession, and, indeed, there were not many about. Late in the afternoon we came on a small herd, which seemed a little less shy. The master buck was not a black one, but a very fair one, approaching a dark shade of brown. They would not let us get within a couple of hundred yards, but at length H—— dropped

down behind a clump of camel-thorns, while we circled round them. With some little trouble we got them to move in the required direction, but then they would not stand. As they were walking along I saw a puff of smoke, and as the accompanying report reached my ear the big buck collapsed, while the others made off with mighty bounds. The natives were considerably astonished at H——'s performance, the distance being about a hundred and seventy yards.

This was the last chance we had, as our homeward way lay over the plain we had worked in the morning.

The tonga ponies were wretchedly bad, and at one time I thought they would never get us, and their additional load of a buck and two chikara, through the heavy sand which lay between us and the high-road. When we got home it was long after dinner-time, but these are the minor annoyances that the sportsman has to put up with. Indeed, the next time we went out we fared much worse, for no sooner had we got to our shooting-ground than the most terrific duststorm I have ever seen came on. For some hours we wandered on, having utterly lost our way among the blinding sand, and when we did get home we were as black as the buck we had not seen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CALPE HUNT.

I SHOULD, I think, begin by saying that of the Calpe Hunt *fin de siècle* I am not in a position to speak. My recollections of Gibraltar date from the seventies, and many changes may have taken place since those days. One I know has, and that is that the extent of cultivated ground—or, in other words, prohibited ground—in the vicinity of the “Rock” has greatly increased of late years, and this is, of course, very prejudicial to sport. The Huntsman, too, has changed, and that the Master and Whips have goes without saying, these latter officials being officers of the garrison, and therefore having perforce changed some dozen times at least.

Among the regular *habitnés* of the Hunt death has been busy. Probably the best known figure at a Calpe meet which he has removed was the one who was known to all Rock sportsmen as “Jorrocks.” The nickname fitted him in his enthusiasm for sport, and the apparent incongruity of his occupation therewith, but not in his personal appearance. Nothing could have been less like the smug, podgy grocer that Leech’s pencil had immortalised, than the rather raw-

boned, tall figure of the Gibraltar Jorrocks. He wore a full beard, too, bushy and unkempt. A weather-beaten pink, hunting-cap, and brown tops were the leading features of his hunting costume, and stuck into one of these latter he always carried a huge knife, for what reason I cannot say. At this time his invariable mount was a raw-boned liver chestnut. I believe his name was Holmes, and that he was employed in the Gibraltar gas works. Peace be to his ashes! If he died at the Rock, he now lies appropriately enough in the only cemetery I know which is encircled by a racecourse, and within earshot of the kennels.

A meet of the Calpe Hounds did not differ very greatly from that of many provincial English packs. There were always only a few "pinks," more black, and a good deal of nondescript attire. The horses used were small, averaging about fifteen hands, Barbs and Spanish, and mostly stallions. My stud was very small in those days, and I generally fell back at least one day a week on the hack hunters of the place. One of the best of these was a broken-kneed bay, "Jack-o'-Lantern." Then there was another which nobody else had patience to ride. This was a little bay—a very good hunter, but cursed with more than mule-like obstinacy. I generally managed to get him as far as the main road, where he would stop. Flogging and spurring was no use; he only acknowledged such attentions by sullen kicks. All I could do was to get his quarters against a wall so that he couldn't jib, and wait patiently till some other sportsman passed on his way to the meet. Then he would follow steadily

enough, and no man could want a better mount—as long as he did not offer to leave the hounds and come home. This proceeding only resulted in more jibbing and kicking.

Two officials were always to be seen at the Calpe meets, whom one does not see elsewhere—the pick and crowbar brigade. This consisted of an old Englishman—an army pensioner, I believe—and a Spaniard. They were mounted on mules, and each carried a fox-terrier in his arms. Their animals were hung all round with implements for digging out the fox—spades, crowbars, pickaxes, and tongs. The Englishman, clad in an old huntsman's frock, breeches, and gaiters, might have passed as an earthstopper at home. It was the Spaniard whose appearance always provoked a smile. Attired as he was in a sombrero and mantle, he looked so entirely out of keeping with his surroundings. The grave, Donnish face added to the incongruity. The necessity for these men lay, of course, in the impossibility of stopping a country almost entirely consisting of rocky hills. In the same way the Dartmoor Hounds have a terrier-boy, who carries a couple of terriers in saddle-bags for use among the rocky tors of that wild district. At Gibraltar, where a straightaway run and a kill in the open are equally the exception, it was unusual not to be able to summon these officials to extract the quarry from his refuge.

The hunting country at Gibraltar may be divided roughly into two kinds. It is hardly necessary to say that in English territory there is no room for hunting.

Consequently the sport begins about two miles out, at the hill known as the Queen of Spain's Chair. From this to north and east stretches a long series of wild, rocky ranges, the going becoming worse the further north one goes. To the north of west, however, it is different. There an hour's ride brings one into the first of a long series of cork-forests, and in those districts the hunting is not unlike woodland sport at home.

It goes without saying that the country I have described is practically unfenced. It must not, however, be supposed on that account that the riding is free from danger. To live with hounds one must ride up and down those sort of places which are often described as "as steep as the side of a house." The best going may be a mule or goat track—the worst a Titanic pile of loose rocks. Down these the clever little horses of the country go easily, slipping down here, jumping there, or bucking over a big rock. But an attempt to guide them is sure to result in a fall. To a new-comer the place seems awful, in a fortnight it seems nothing. I once overheard one man in a newly-landed regiment remark to another: "Just look how that fellow rides!" The fellow was myself, for hounds, having just found, I was going best pace through a covert of high broom, interspersed with huge rocks. In about a week the speaker had learnt equal confidence in his mount.

Clever as the horses are, it must not be supposed that serious falls do not happen. In fact, at the period I speak of the Huntsman, Payne, had a tremendous crumpler, breaking several bones. From

the very nature of things it follows that such falls are serious, as they very often result in horse and man rolling down half a hillside. The Higueron country, north-eastwards from the Rock, is perhaps the most unrideable of all, and those meets are always the worst attended. Taking it all in all, it is probably the roughest "country" in the world. The only thing I know that will at all compare with it is that one meets with sometimes pig-sticking in India, and this latter has the further drawback that you must go top-speed all the way.

Fences there are here and there, nevertheless, generally made by heaping up thorns and interlacing cactus. The newly-landed subaltern generally makes a point of putting his horse at the first of these he sees. Instead, however, of the good-humoured approval "larking" meets with at home, he is met with yells of horror from the field. "Come back! Cultivation!" is the cry. These little fences mean that the brown earth the other side has been ploughed, and as the not very wealthy Hunt has to pay for every footmark on these, they are even more carefully guarded than wheat or seeds in England. Nay, more, the Spanish cultivator is quite likely to take the law into his own hands. I recollect one summer evening, when two of us were larking over a loose stone wall near the sea, a Spanish peasant shouting to us to desist. But not only did he not wait to see if we stopped, which we did, but rushing into the house, returned with his *escopeta*, or blunderbuss, the sight of which effectually sent us galloping off. As a rule, however, the

Spaniards are fairly tolerant of the Hunt, though I have known them bring a shot fox to the covert-side in triumph. Stories of violence were, however, already of ancient date in my day, though, more as a matter of tradition than otherwise, we generally carried heavy brass-handled hunting-crops. The Spaniard's appreciation of the sport is well summed-up in the oft-quoted lines :

Th' unwonted sight the Spanish hind amazes,
And loud he cries, "*Que locos los Inglesos!*"*

In my day, the only danger was from the *Guarda Costas*, or Coast Guard, who were much too ready to "shoot on sight." One of the Spanish Regulations was that all persons should pass their lines at a walk. The reason of this was obviously to prevent smuggling : but this did not prevent one of them from sending a bullet whistling after a brother officer of mine, who was hurrying home to save being locked out. His red coat must have ensured their knowing who he was.

This gate question was one of the nuisances of Gibraltar hunting. The gates of the Rock are all locked at evening gunfire. When, however, the hounds are not back at kennels the ceremony is deferred till they arrive. If, however, you have lost your way, or lamed your horse and cannot return with them, no power will suffice to open the gates that night ; and unless you happen to have hospitable acquaintance at the Musketry Camp on the North Front, you are likely to fare badly.

* What lunatics the English are.

From the very nature of things Gibraltar memories do not contain those of many red-letter days, most of the runs being short spins, or ringing ones. I do, however, recollect one day when we had a really first-rate gallop, and what is more it followed another very fair run the same day.

The meet was at the Second Venta, or in other words in the Cork Wood Country. Before we had drawn much of the Cork Wood we found our first fox in a marshy bottom. For about an hour they rattled him about the woodlands at a fair hunting pace, till they finally pulled him down in the nearest approach to the open that one gets in that district, in the presence of most of the field. This was quite a pleasant run for the ladies and other easy-going members of the Hunt, for they were able to keep with hounds all the way.

A long draw followed, but mile after mile of country proved blank. A good many people had gone home convinced that we had had our day's sport, when all of a sudden I came over a ridge into a steep valley just in time to see the sterns of the pack, which was drawing the opposite brow, all go up together. I was convinced it was a find though I had not heard a sound, and sent old "Jack-o'-Lantern" along as hard as he could lay legs to the ground.

I was right. When I reached the further ridge I caught sight of the pack driving silently along the side of a long hill at right angles to my course. I bore to the left, and pressed on. For over twenty minutes we ran so, hounds strung out along the opposite hill, and

the small field (for most were slipped at the start) on this side of the valley.

“There’s an earth just on there,” said the Master, and I expected the end of our gallop, which had been fast. But no, hounds pushed on harder than ever and we settled down to ride. Choosing one’s own line is not easy there, but in a quarter of an hour we were pretty well scattered. I had a flying glimpse of San Roque, lying far below to the right, which was my only guide to our whereabouts. Meanwhile the going got worse. I was following our first whip, Luxford of the Welsh Fusiliers, for there was only one track of any kind where even a Spanish horse could go.

“Take your own line, do,” he shouted back.

He was right, for the fall of one would have brought us both down; but where else could a horse go? So I pulled back a couple of lengths. Presently he crossed the bottom to the right, and I, seeing a slight track before me, kept straight on.

My track, unfortunately, soon disappeared, and the going became truly awful. At last I had to turn uphill on a ridge, and presently was confronted by a huge rock, perhaps some three feet out of the ground. I crammed “Jack-o’-Lantern” at it, but the horse was too blown for the up-leap. His feet slipped on the rock, the hind legs went from under him, and I felt him coming back on me. By great good fortune he fell towards the hill, and still more luckily I landed in a large gorse-bush—soft if prickly. Having rolled me well into it, my unlucky steed proceeded to turn over himself, and finally brought up in the bottom, some

dozen feet below. Both of us were soon up again, and a hasty look round having convinced me that there was no other place, I made for the rock again. A vigorous dig of the spurs resulted in a successful, if rather slithering, effort.

A few minutes more brought us to the edge of the table-land just as the Master and second Whip appeared at the other edge, riding towards me. Hounds had evidently circled towards me, but where were they? A bay and some growling solved the question. Their fox had got to ground at the bottom of a deep hollow between us, the said hollow hiding them from our sight.

“Who-whoop! Who-whoop!”

A minute brought up the rest of the field—seven in all.

“Where are we?” asked somebody.

“Why, this is close to the Higueron!” was the answer.

An eight-mile point—some minutes under the three-quarters of an hour. Good enough for the Shires!

Yes, there, not far before us, lay the Mediterranean. Our run had taken us almost from sea to sea. Of course there was no chance of realising our fox. The pick and crowbar brigade were many a mile away. All we could think of was the way home. The midwinter day was drawing to a close. We made for the First Tower on the Eastern Beach. From thence it was plain sailing. *El Cuerpo** lay before us, sharply outlined against the evening sky.

* The Corpse—the Spanish name for the Rock of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GROUSE-SHOOTING.

THE eternal controversy between dogs and no dogs, walking up game and driving it, returns each year with the shooting season. I confess that I myself bring an open mind to bear upon the question. I believe that each and every method of shooting has a charm of its own. While driving demands greater skill behind the gun, and is in itself beneficial to the head of game maintained, inasmuch as the old and cunning cock-birds fall the first victims, the pleasure of seeing dogs work is to me very great. What prettier sight can there be than to see a brace of well-broken pointers or setters, one standing motionless as if carved in stone, while the other, half-a-dozen yards behind, "backs" his comrade's point? Unless it is that one, which I confess I have never seen, but which older men have described to me, of half-a-dozen black-and-tan spaniels working together, and all dropping to the shot. No such team of spaniels, I venture to say, could be found in England to-day—more's the pity.

The controversy rages most briskly, perhaps, about grouse-shooting, and no wonder, for it is delightful sport both ways.

Grouse-shooting may be said to be the most typical shooting of Britain. In the first place the grouse (*Lagopus scoticus*) is peculiar to the British Isles. It was originally, no doubt, spread over all of them, but the increase of cultivation has greatly reduced their range. It is now limited in England to the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire—in other words, to the extreme north. It is found in Wales, principally in the north, all over Scotland, and in the northern parts of Ireland.

Secondly, the haunt of the grouse is as a rule far from the dwellings of man. It is in itself an unaccustomed pleasure to most grouse-shooters to wander over the moors and steep hillsides, frequented generally only by the black-faced sheep and their guardians. To the man whose business or pleasure keeps him in the towns, there can be no keener delight than walking over the crisp heather, watching one's favourites draw steadily up to their game. Many a hard-worked man owes his health to his annual month among the grouse.

Grouse-driving is a sport apart. Long observation of the habits and the flight of the grouse on any moor is necessary to success. These being ascertained, the shelters are built. Their construction differs according to the purpose they are required to fulfil. If the birds are only to be driven one way, they are simply curved breastworks of turf. If on the other hand the beat is found to lend itself to driving the

grouse backwards as well as forwards, they are circular. In either case they are generally fitted with a rough seat and a shelf for cartridges. It is almost unnecessary to remark that these shelters must be made many months before they are required, so that the birds may have plenty of time to become familiar with them.

Unlike other driving, grouse-driving can be carried out at the very beginning of the season, but as a matter of fact not much is done before the middle of September. The arrangements are perfectly simple. According to the wind and weather, the butts to be used and the ground to be driven are selected. The guns draw lots for positions, and each man is placed behind his butt, with his loader. The number of beaters varies, of course, with the extent of ground to be driven, but it is generally considerable. Shouting and noise are strictly forbidden. All the beaters have to do is to advance in a straight line, each man holding up the little flag with which he has been supplied. One after another the coveys rise before them and fly towards the guns.

These latter are snugly ensconced behind their butts. It is necessary that they should be completely out of sight till the birds are nearly within shot, as grouse are very apt to turn aside if they see anything suspicious in front. At last the first birds are near, and then the shooter rises to his feet to attempt to kill a brace before they get up to him. Seizing his second gun he then tries to get some more as they go

away, but the attempt requires both good shooting and a quick change of guns. There are some half-dozen men in England who, with their regular loaders, can be relied upon to kill their two brace every time.

The ordinary sportsman with no experience of either grouse or partridge driving, would probably fail to touch a feather. Very often the grouse are found in packs consisting of from five to fifty coveys. The number of birds killed will then depend greatly upon the quickness of the loader. Presently the line of beaters appears in sight, the coveys come more seldom, and at last the beat is over. The game is collected, and if another lot of butts have to be occupied the shooters move on to them. If on the other hand the ground is to be driven back again, the guns remain where they are whilst the beaters tramp off, moving round the ground that is to be driven so as not to disturb it. Such, with the interval for luncheon, and the occasional presence of the fair sex both at this meal and in the butts afterwards, is a day's grouse-driving. It will be seen that it affords, except in the arrangements for the drives, absolutely no knowledge of what our forefathers called "woodcraft." On the other hand it is impossible to provide a fairer opportunity for the exhibition of a man's shooting powers. The rate at which driven grouse, with a wind at their backs, fly is perfectly incredible to one who has not seen them.

Now let me turn to the other branch of the sport—grouse-shooting over dogs. Pointers and setters are used indifferently, according to the nature of the

moor. Some Scotch (especially Highland) moors are singularly waterless, and here, if the weather is at all warm, the setter soon knocks up, while the pointer, with the aid of a little water carried in a bottle, will work on all day. If there is no choice for this reason, I prefer setters. Both have their advocates, and, perhaps, if the matter were gone into, it would be found to be as much a case of sentiment as anything else. It goes without saying that the dogs must have had lots of exercise beforehand, for the heather, especially where burnt, soon finds out tender feet.

A few years ago it was my good fortune to receive an invitation to shoot on an estate in the Lowlands of Scotland, which I will call Dalekirk. Our host, though hale and hearty, was a little too advanced in years for the moors himself, so our party was reduced to three. These were E——, a member of the household of Queen Victoria—who, though suffering from the effects of an old wound in his left arm, managed to make some very pretty shooting with a specially fitted gun—our host's youngest son, and myself.

The first shooting day after my arrival was a perfect day, though, perhaps, rather too hot for shooting, and for scent. The sky was blue, without a cloud, and the sea near the house rippled in with little movement as the three of us went down to the beach for a morning swim. Returning to the house, we despatched such a breakfast as only Scotland can produce, and taking our guns and cartridge-bags made for the hill. We found the keeper waiting for us at

a farm, which formed the last outpost of cultivation on the edge of the moors, with a team of the most perfect dogs I have ever seen, all black and white setters. A short walk brought us to the heather. There was only one thing to militate against the success of our day. Three is a bad number. Four is better, for then the party can be divided. On this occasion we refused the proposition that one should shoot in misanthropical solitude, and decided to walk together.

Before long one of the first couple of dogs loosed began to draw, and finally stood before our young host, his mate steadily backing. Walking up, the lad began the day with a neatly-killed brace, and almost as soon as they were gathered the other dog was pointing. This time it was before E—— and myself, and that covey yielded three. The walking was good along this beat, and the birds lay well, but before long we saw we were in for a steep hill. We got to know it well before the day was out. Chainharrow (that was the nearest we got to its Gaelic name) had an awkward way of intruding into all the beats on the moor. It was uncommonly steep in parts, and the wind being on the other side, the heat of that sunny climb was considerable. The old cock grouse had an affection for this hill, and had a provoking habit of getting up just as one was thoroughly winded, and thus generally escaping untouched.

However, all things come to an end, and so did "Chainharrow." The view from the top certainly repaid the climb. Far below, the sea and the Solway Firth lay sparkling in the sun, and on the

horizon were some steep, hazy peaks which were pointed out to us as the Isle of Man. What was more to the point just then was that far before us lay a purple stretch of moor—one of the favourite beats on the moor. On we went over this, picking up here a brace, there a single bird, and there a couple of brace. Sometimes, too, a covey, deprived of its natural leaders, would drop again close in front and “lie like stones” till we had killed them all. At last we saw before us a high stone dyke, indicating the “march,” or boundary of the estate. A good many coveys had dropped between us and it, and after some consultation between our young host and the keeper, E—— and I were posted behind some conveniently-placed gorse and rocks, while the rest of the party, consisting of our host with the keeper and his lads, skirted the strip and beat it back from the boundary. This proceeding gave E—— and I some very pretty driven shots, after which we adjourned to lunch, where a trickling rill sparkled on the hillside. After lunch we walked back again towards the hill, down it, and up again further on. At last the beat was exhausted, and the sun was beginning to sink. The heat had been very tiring, and we were not sorry to knock off, and turn our steps homewards. In the avenue we met our host, who hailed us.

“Well, boys, what have you done?”

“Fifty-seven brace of grouse and five extras,” was our reply.

The true or Scottish grouse is the only European

variety I have ever shot, except, of course, the black-cock. This, however, is not, I believe, scientifically speaking, a true grouse. I have several times been on the point of starting for the Arctic Circle to shoot the willow grouse, or rypea, but something or other has always prevented my going.

Of Asiatic grouse I know two varieties, the greater and lesser sand-grouse. Both are common in India at certain seasons, especially the latter. Though prettily marked birds, they are when alive so exactly the colour of the yellowish sand they inhabit that it is impossible to see them when almost at one's feet. They rise with a whistling cry, and are easy to shoot. It is somewhat curious to note that though neither when flying close at hand, nor when in one's hand, nor when cooked, have they any characteristics (bar their feathered legs) in common with the Scottish grouse, when they are flying at some distance no one familiar with the latter could mistake them for anything but grouse. They have that peculiar flight of the tribe, which is impossible to describe, but which will be found admirably depicted in the instantaneous photographs in the Badminton Book on Shooting.

Unfortunately, as I have said, when cooked there is no resemblance between them and that most delicious of game birds, their Scottish cousins. They are dry and tasteless, like most Indian game.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOX-HUNTING—EARLY AND LATE.

IN no part of England, with the exception perhaps of the New Forest, is the “sport of kings, the image of war”* carried on so early and so late as on those great moorlands which take their names from the two rivers to which they give birth—the Exe and the Dart.

As is well known, regular fox-hunting—as opposed to cub-hunting—begins generally throughout England at the beginning of November, and dies a natural death at a period varying according to the forwardness of the season between the third week in March and the second in April. But on Exmoor and Dartmoor things are different. The question of crops affects the matter not at all, and even the delicate subject of lambing need only enter slightly into the Master’s calculations. Besides, as these hounds find their fox as often as not on the open moor, it is an easy matter to see whether the object of chase is a desirable one or not. In other words, the hounds can be easily stopped off a gravid vixen or let go if they happen on

* “Handley Cross”—*passim*.

an old dog-fox, without any risk of leaving an interesting family motherless.

Some years ago it was my fate to be an eye-witness of some of these early and late days with the Exmoor and Dartmoor Foxhounds, and both, strange to say, in the same season, and I propose to describe one day of each kind, so as to give my readers an idea of how the English national sport is carried on in these wild and unpopulated districts.

The meet fixed for October 15th, 18—, was in many respects a typical Exmoor one. In the first place, was not the trysting-place the house of that noted Exmoor sportsman and pony-breeder, Sir Frederick Winn Knight? Secondly, though the said house lies low and warm in the pretty little valley of Simonsbath, it also lies near the wildest and “wettest” (*i.e.* boggiest) ground on the whole of Exmoor.

An Exmoor field presents little resemblance to the smart scarlet-clad crowd which is to be seen at the gatherings of a Midland pack. On this occasion the field was a large one, for be it known the autumn is the “season” on Exmoor, when scores of sportsmen foregather for the chase of the wild red deer. Among that field only one “pink” is to be seen, however—that worn by the whip. Even the Master is in mufti. The Master in those days was Mr. Snow, the Squire of Oare. Though the best-tempered man in the world, there is one sore point on which he may be roused. Ask him if he descended from the “Farmer Snow” mentioned in “Lorna Doone,” and you will be somewhat sharply told that the Snows were Squires of

Oare long before the days of James II. Indeed, though advancing years have forced him to resign the horn to younger hands, I dare say it would even now be somewhat dangerous for Mr. R. D. Blackmore to show his face in the domains of the last Squire of Oare.

Besides the natives there is a sprinkling of regular visitors, who never miss their annual stag-hunting on Exmoor, and some whom chance has brought there.

After hospitable entertainment a move is made, the first draw being a covert known as Cornham Brake. Here there was at least one fox, for hounds, by heading first towards Duredon and then turning short back, managed to throw out the bulk of the field, who never saw them again. Grexy Ball, I am told, is the name of the first ridge we top, and then we find ourselves on the well-known Moles' Chamber, one of the wettest and highest parts of the moor. Very bleak and barren the short grass is here, too. We are riding over treacherous ground indeed, intersected as it is with small grips and drains. Several coats are mud-plastered already, and there are a few riderless horses about. A bad job for their riders this, for a horse lost on the moor is no joke, but the pace is too good to afford assistance. Hounds have been running very fast all this time, and when we emerge on Bray Common our fox seems to have had enough, for without apparent reason he turns short back and retraces his steps for Grexy Ball, hounds running harder than ever. Here he finds temporary shelter in

a rabbit-hole, very few of the original field being up at the "Who-whoop!" after this capital fifty-five minutes gallop.

While we lead our smoking steeds about, Reynard is extracted from his refuge—for blood is a necessity at the beginning of the season—and the brush is taken to Lady Knight.

Now let us turn to the Dartmoor. A meet there is a more full-dress affair than that I have last presented to the reader, for the nearness of the large garrison town of Plymouth alone accounts for a score of "pinks" and "blacks." Among the hunt servants is one official who, I believe, is unknown with any other English pack. This is the "terrier-boy," an urchin in scarlet, who carries in the two leather bags behind his saddle two hard-bitten fox-terriers with their heads peeping out. The reason for this is that there are on Dartmoor many great masses of rocks which cannot be stopped, and as foxes often make for these, it is necessary to have terriers at hand to bolt them. These hounds at the time I write of were hunted by a professional huntsman.

On the day I am going to try and bring before my readers there is very little "pink" to be seen—only the hunt servants' in fact, for is it not the 4th of May and a hot day at that? Filham Village is the meet, and Filham Furze the draw. There is a fox here sure enough, but the eager foot-people head him back. However, there is a rare scent in spite of the heat, and he must go or die. The next attempt to

reach the moor is more successful, and away go the hounds at a pace which is simply terrific. The Rifle Butts and Hangershell fly past, and we reach the ridge overlooking Pyles—alas! only to see hounds marking where the “varmint” has saved himself by taking refuge in that well-known stronghold. Only a quarter of an hour’s gallop, but it was nearly a four-mile point, and our horses are white with lather.

The next draw is a covert near Hangershell, called Dowse’s Brake, and it is soon “Tally-ho away!” again. He makes for Pyles—oh, horror!—but fortunately before getting there bears to the left, thus bringing us into some very nasty complications of walls and water.

The great hill called Halldon Barrow lies before us now, and just as we are congratulating ourselves on the fox having skirted it, hounds turn up it and we must follow. We emerge on Storr Moor, hounds far in front and running very hard. At Yadsworthy they leave the moor and enter the enclosures. Most of the field stick to the moor, and we never see them again.

What a pace they go over these fields! Here is a river—no time to ask which. Through it we splash and toil up to Harford Village. As we clatter down the village street we see hounds running just behind the cottages. We sweep to the left at the church. See, the fox tops the wall and lands in the road as the leading hounds reach the wall. At the opposite wall his strength fails. Who-whoop! Who-whoop!

We look round; where is the huntsman? Where

the field? Echo answers, where? Only four of us saw the last half of that glorious thirty minutes. Well, that countryman has a knife. The last honours are performed, and the fox eaten ten minutes before the field turn up. This year we shall be among the very few who have seen a May fox killed.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MONMOUTHSHIRE FOX.

YEAR by year as November comes round, the leading articles in the sporting newspapers strike the warning note that fox-hunting exists only on sufferance nowadays. The handwriting is on the wall, they say, and the time coming when the changed conditions of existence will prevent such things as reckless riding over other people's land.

Personally, I think if we are to see the national sport—and surely fox-hunting, not racing, is that—decay, it will not be through the causes which have been so often held before us as those which must bring about the termination of the sport which Beckford so truly described as being “by nature designed to be the amusement of the Briton.”

The reasons generally given by the prophets of evil are twofold; firstly, wire fencing, and secondly, agricultural depression and the tendency of land laws towards “nationalisation.” Now it seems to me that Australian hunting men have disposed of the first objection, as they habitually jump five strand wire as readily as we do sheep-hurdles.

As to the second objection, there may be more in

it, but it seems to me hard to believe that the British agriculturist—whether, as now, large tenant farmer, or, as our Radical friends would have him, small freeholder or state tenant—will ever be shortsighted enough to wish to abolish one of the principal sources whence the profits are derived. A farmer who tries to interfere with hunting only reminds one of a pig swimming, which cuts its own throat in its endeavours.

Let us suppose him successful in his attempt. Where will the market for his young horses be, then? Who will pay him top prices for the old hay and old oats on which alone condition can be maintained? Even straw, which at recent prices has paid for the cultivation of wheat, will be in little demand, for the owners of “business horses” patronise moss-litter more and more every day. Nearly five millions are spent on hunting every year. How large a share of this goes into the farmer’s pocket is obvious. Is he likely to interfere with this source of income?

No; if fox-hunting is to decline, it will not be to the wire fence or to the farmer’s opposition that it will succumb, but to the degeneracy of Reynard himself.

Who that has hunted both in the home and crack counties, and also in those more remote from centres of civilisation, can have failed to compare the foxes of the former unfavourably with those of the latter? Nor are the causes of this degeneracy far to seek. As surely as artificial earths and the hand-rearing of cubs have introduced mange into the vulpine race, so surely are high preserving and too much motherly coddling

unfitting that race to be the beasts of chase nature had made them.

Contrast the cub of the mountain with that of the pheasant-covert. From the first the former is used to see the game or poultry he eats brought home by his dam. As soon as his strength is equal to it he has to go and learn how to seek it himself. Before autumn comes he knows the country far around his native earth, and, when the cubbing season has shown him that the note of the foxhound means, "Run or die," he combines every requisite to enable him to give a fine run later on—strength, health, courage, and knowledge of the country.

Very different is the case with the other. When only a few weeks old he hears the shot that rolls his dam over dead close to her earth. He is then dug out and conveyed in a sack to an outhouse which will be his home for months, and there, fed on unwholesome offal, he loses health and courage. In August he is taken back to the woods, but as he has no idea of the methods of gaining his food he might starve but for the plentiful supply of specially-shot rabbits he finds lying about. When the hounds come cubbing he is routed out of the wood. In his new quarters, however, there are no dead rabbits, and his inborn instinct takes him home again before the next day breaks. So it goes on till one day he is killed, his epitaph being "Ringing brute!" How could it be otherwise, as he has never yet been a mile from his birthplace?

Yet the very people who say, "Good fellow, Jones; don't hunt himself, but always has a fox in his

coverts," fail to see also that he never has a straight-necked one. For all the good Jones's foxes are to hunting they might as well be bagmen. Jones himself very likely knows no better, and, as long as his coverts hold foxes as well as pheasants, thinks his keeper a capital manager.

Even where things are not so bad as this, I am inclined to think foxes are not improved by the knowledge which they must surely have of their impunity. I try to recollect a fashionable country where foxes really *run*, and can stand up to a fast pack forty-five minutes *really without a check*, but I fail to recall one. Even in Ireland, Meath is as bad as Hampshire, which is saying a good deal. Kildare is better, probably because of the great mountains which form her eastern border, and the equally wild Bog of Allen to the south-west.

Personally, I am inclined to think such *pseudo* fox preservation is worse than none. One can, to a certain extent, respect the cynical brutality of the shooting tenants on the Southampton Water edge of the New Forest country. Not only do they forbid the hounds to draw the coverts at all till their shooting is over, but when they are drawn thoroughly (once or twice during the spring) they *never hold a fox*. I have personally assisted at the carrying out of this solemn farce. At all events, the Master in this case knows his foes.

Let us leave such painful subjects and turn to those countries where foxes are not only plentiful but wild and vigorous. As far as I can recollect, I have seen

the most wonderful feats of endurance performed by the foxes of the Lake Country, when hunting with the Coniston and Blencathra packs. Be it remembered, however, that, being on foot, men cannot see what hounds really *do* with these packs. Moreover, a score of years have elapsed since I hunted there.

Exmoor, Dartmoor, and Wales too can show fine and enduring foxes. Yet I think, and I hope it is not natural partiality that prompts the thought, that in no other English county can there be found tougher, wilier, and more enduring specimens of the fox tribe than in my native county of Monmouthshire.

Let me hasten to say that I do not desire to base this conclusion on the wonderful run which is described in the "New Sporting Magazine" for 1821. This fox, for the writer never hints at the idea of a change, was found in the great covert of Wentwood (the old Forest of Gwent), and, after running over the greatest part of the present Parliamentary Division of South Monmouthshire, crossed the Wye into Gloucestershire near Tintern, and ran nearly to Lydney-on-Severn, whence he turned back homewards again, but was pulled down at Woolaston *five hours and twenty minutes from the find*. The writer concludes by remarking that only some half-a-dozen sportsmen were in at the death, and of these, *not all* started from Wentwood. The italics are mine. As the spot where the fox crossed the river was down one precipice and up another, with a tidal river between, half-a-dozen miles from a bridge, I should imagine they did *not*.

My memory from childhood and the diaries of my

riper years provide me with so many instances of the pluck and endurance of foxes bred between the Forest of Dean on the one side and that of Gwent on the other, that I am almost at a loss to know which run to select for these pages. Before making my choice I may be allowed some remarks on a country not known to many hunting-men. As a riding country it certainly is not to be commended. In the first place, it is quite half woodland, and rather hilly. On its eastern boundary comes the valley of the Wye, which I have just glanced at, and which, except as a vulpine nursery, is useless from a hunting point of view. In fact, the only parts where hounds can really be ridden to are the unwooded portions of the great ridge between Usk and Wye, part of the valley of the former river, and the reclaimed land on the Severn shore, whose deep and wide drains, locally known as "rheines," require a hunter of some "scope," as those who, like myself, have been in one know well. Nothing short of a team of carthorses will extricate a hunter from them. I ought, perhaps, to say that I do not refer at all to the country hunted by the Monmouthshire Hounds, a country in which I have hunted very little, but nevertheless seen some good gallops.

March 15th, 188—, was the date of the run I select to show what a Monmouthshire fox can do. At a covert called Cross Robert we found, and hounds started off a cracker through Fedwvawr Wood (which unpronounceable name I beg the reader to recollect) to the moorlands at the top of the Whitebrook Valley. Thence he turned short back to Trelleck, whence he

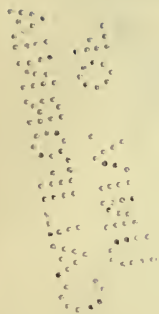
descended the steep hill into the valley of the Monnow. At Cwmcarvan he had had enough of this, and retraced his steps to Fedwvawr Wood, where they checked. At this time we had been running an hour and three-quarters at a pace which made it a matter of wonder to me, fresh as I was from a crack country, how any fox could stand up before hounds so long. The check was a long one, but our fox was not resting, for hitting off the line we dragged slowly after him to Penallt Common again, and in a ring back to his favourite wood of Fedwvawr. This time he had taken a rest, for he was fresh found and, *remember*, viewed away, a dirty, draggled (I had almost said beaten), and undeniably hunted fox.

Scent was better now than ever, and hounds fairly flew past Trelleck and across the Peat Bog to the Parkhurst Rocks.

Thence he ran along the ridge overlooking the valley through several coverts, of which I will not weary the reader with a string of names, and finally, *forty-five minutes from the fresh find*, pointed his mask again for the valley, and ran right across it to Dingestow Church. The idea of descending this formidable hill choked off many of the field, though no one could have expected the fox to ascend it again. Reascend it, however, he did to Trelleck, and then ran towards the Wye Valley. When he reached its upper edge at Cleidan, he once more turned back to the Parkhurst Rocks, and ran his old line by Woolpitch to Fedwvawr.

Towards the end of this journey the combination





of a stout rail and a blown horse put me out of court for the time, and broke my wrist-watch. So I can only say that when I reached the wood I found they had marked him to ground, and were proceeding to dig—much to my regret.

I did not wait to watch this uninteresting, though sometimes necessary operation, but I heard afterwards that it resulted in the death of the most gallant fox I have ever seen.

Taking the distances from one short point to another I make it twenty-nine miles, and the time, counting checks, was about four hours. There was no reason to imagine that we had ever changed foxes, in fact, the whip told me that he had every reason to think that the fox he had originally viewed away from Cross Robert, the one fresh-found at Fedwvawr, and the one dug out and killed, were one and the same. It was a very large old dog.

Such powers of endurance in a fox, I think, I have never seen equalled before or since, for if we rode over thirty miles, what must the fox have covered? The nearest approach I can recall to this was a fox in Pembrokeshire not ten years ago, who ran about twenty-four miles in three hours and thirty-five minutes, going to ground once during the journey, and being promptly ejected by a terrier.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE "FOREST OF ARDEN."

THE bells are pealing for the afternoon mass as I step out of the gate of the old château. I do not think I ever recollect such a perfect Christmas, and not often so fine a winter day. The cloudless sky is of a deep dark blue, in which the winter sun shines brightly, but with little power, for the thermometer shows five degrees of frost. I walk briskly up the stone-paved street down which the congregation are hastening to church. Such a day would invest a commonplace scene with beauty, and very picturesque the brightly coloured houses and the ruined old feudal castle high above them look to-day. Ten minutes takes me past the little houses nestling under the great rocks, and turning up a by-path I enter the forest. My dachshunds, who always share my rambles in the woods (thanks to a friendly forester, for it is contrary to the law), dash into the cover and try in vain to pick up a scent. The frost is too hard for that. The beech and oak-trees shoot straight up here without a branch for many feet, owing to the local custom of lopping the lower branches. Beneath my feet is a carpet of dead leaves, frozen so hard that my footsteps

sound as loud as on a metalled road. Now and then I pass plantations of young firs; other underwood there is none—the beech brooks no lowlier rival. As I gain at last the highest crest I pause for breath and to enjoy the “pleasure in the pathless woods.” The dogs have rambled off, probably on the cold scent of a wandering deer, and the silence is absolute. These woods seem almost birdless in winter. Now and then a jay dashes off with his harsh note of alarm, but except an occasional wren, these are all the feathered foresters to be met with.

But the forest is not uninhabited for all that. Resuming my walk I reach a little frozen pool. Ah, the monarch of the forest has been here lately. All round the mud is disturbed by footmarks, and here is the mark where a great side wallowed in content. The trees around, too, are coated with mud where the bristly wanderers rubbed themselves after their bath, and on the bark of one of them fresh scars testify to the fact that at least one boar accompanied the “sunder.”

Now the forest is broken by a road skirted by a few acres of cultivation. Crossing this, and passing through some ten-year-old firs, I am in the beech-woods again, and here again are marks of life. The roe-deer have been scraping down the moss from the beech-trunks with their feet. Times must be hard with them just now.

But I am approaching my goal, an old Roman camp, known to the natives as the Altburg. Surely this is the most picturesque, as it is probably the least

known, of the memorials of those old conquerors. It is very unlike in plan to the camp of which we have boyish memories in "Notes to Cæsar's Commentaries." Let me try to describe it. From the little tableland I have been crossing, a spur shoots out boldly into the plain. On each side is a valley—or rather gorge—cutting it off from the tableland adjoining. Where the valleys meet the top of the spur is some hundred feet above them, and there they meet a rolling plain. The precipitous sides of the valley formed the fortifications. Only the side I am approaching lay open, and there the legionaries built a double rampart, still some dozen feet high. Here is the decuman gate. I enter and am still among the beeches. On my left is the valley, the steep sides of which still show traces of escarpment.

As I proceed the valleys approach nearer, the other one is fringed with a mass of precipitous water-worn rocks. Little fortification was needed there. Now I stand on the point. Before me are miles of forest interspersed with farms. No house is visible, but I hear a church bell somewhere. To the north of the woods and hills the fields are white, elsewhere the bright sun has effaced the marks of last night's frost. On my right is another line of rocky cliffs lined with dark firs. But it is beneath me the rocks assume the quaintest forms. I descend a score of feet; here the rock is riven by half-a-dozen clefts to a great depth. Walking behind the rock, and looking out through these, gives exactly the effect of being in a ruined castle.

Hark, the little hounds are in full cry in the valley. I enter one of the clefts where the wandering game have made a regular path. It is hardly wide enough for me to squeeze through, but it is twenty feet high. Emerging on a rocky shelf ten yards on, I at once see the object of their pursuit. It is a fox, who is just entering the fir-wood on the cliff opposite. The hounds are straining up the steep bank, and the valley rings with their echoed cry. Then they cross where I saw the fox, and are also lost to view. Soon all is silent, and before I have descended the steep slope I see them returning breathless. There is a main earth among the firs, and without encouragement they will not trouble to force Reynard out. If I tell my friend the forester he will put a trap there to-morrow. But I have a British feeling for poor pug, and the forester must find him for himself.

Skirting the plain for a quarter of a mile, I recommence the ascent where the slopes are covered with young pines. Here are game-tracks in abundance, mostly made by one animal, of whose identity the frequent presence of rough excavations leaves no doubt. The dogs dash briskly about, for the badger, as I have elsewhere said, is their hereditary foe. Alas! before I can reach the hill-top I hear a furious barking. I well know whence it proceeds, and slowly approach a series of mounds and great burrows, which the forester calls "the barracks." Yes, here they are, many feet under the ground, and the furious clamour shows that at least one "brock" is at home. Resignedly I sit down and fill my pipe, knowing that

no amount of experience will convince them of the folly of attempting to draw a badger. Hark! a yelp, one of the dogs has "got it," and the uproar below grows more and more furious. Some twenty minutes elapse before one dog emerges, bleeding of course. I promptly secure him, and soon the other follows. It has been cold waiting, and, knocking the ashes out of my pipe, I turn homewards.

Passing through the woods I came on a stone cross. There are dozens here, everywhere on the roadsides, but not so many in the woods. Perhaps there was an old track this way. The cross is rudely sculptured with the figures of Christ and the Virgin with Saint Donatus underneath.

Half a mile more and I emerge on the road within a furlong of where I left it two hours back. The cold is bitter now, and I hasten home. As I slip into the comfortable arm-chair behind the stove and call for tea, the bells ring out again. This time it is the Angelus.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HINTS ON EQUIPMENT, ETC.

My reason for giving a few hints on weapons, camp equipment, clothing, etc., is this. I myself have often been glad to find such information in books about countries and sports that were new to me, and the knowledge so gained has been most useful to me.

Since I commenced the revision of the proofs of this work there has come to hand an illustration of the desirability of young sportsmen's profiting by the experience of their predecessors, at once practical and painful. I allude to the regrettable death of the younger Prince Ruspoli. In case the account of the catastrophe may have escaped the notice of any of my readers, I may say that the Prince met his death elephant-shooting in Eastern Africa. Seeing from his camp a large single elephant, he went out to attack it, alone, on foot, and in open country, with the natural result that the brute's first charge was fatal to the sportsman. The newspaper accounts vary as to the weapon he was using at the time of his death, some giving it as a gun, others as a Wetterly (Italian military) rifle. One fact remains certain—that it was not a proper elephant rifle, and as another paper says the

Prince had shot four elephants previously with a Wetterly rifle, the whole story goes to prove that his rash inexperience was such that it was only a matter of time till the fatal end came. A man may, especially in open country, bag elephants with arms which seem utterly inadequate, and do so repeatedly, but the day of reckoning is sure to come. Any man who neglects the first principles experienced elephant shots observe is sure to come to grief in the long run. Besides being improperly armed, the Prince neglected the following axiom well known throughout Africa: No one in elephant-shooting in open country should ever be a yard away from a thoroughly trained shooting-horse.

It is therefore with the hope that my own experience may be of some use to others that I insert the following "tips."

I. WEAPONS.

a. Firearms.

There are some fortunate sportsmen who can afford to purchase the appropriate arm for every different kind of shooting which may come in their way. I do not address myself to them, but rather to those whose battery is limited by their purse, though at the same time I also give the battery which is my ideal one, and suitable to the man who can not only give his gunmaker *carte blanche*, but also (sometimes a more serious item) arrange for almost indefinite transport.

For European shooting only one rifle is necessary, and if a choice must be made I would advise a .500 Express. I consider this a minimum bore to give satisfactory results with red deer, especially in wooded countries, and it will stop a wounded bear. If the sportsman can afford two rifles, I would recommend the .577 Express for bear, boar, reindeer, red deer, and elk, and the .360 for roe, chamois, and ibex. With at least nine men out of ten, these weapons may just as well be single-barrelled.

One gun only is necessary, but to those who can afford it I would strongly counsel the addition to their battery of one of those small-bore guns of which Charles Lancaster makes a specialty. These guns, which are made in 20, 28, and .410 bores, will drop a grouse at forty yards, and are ideal weapons for snipe and quail shooting in hot climates, where every pound carried tells before the end of the day.

A want long felt, and hitherto unsupplied, is that of a weapon which shall meet every requirement of common European sport, especially in out-of-the-way districts where transport is a difficulty, and satisfy the regulations of those countries whose laws only permit the introduction of one firearm. Some use a stock with interchangeable gun and rifle barrels. In this case it is obvious that the balance of the weapon must be defective with one pair. The Germans are given to the use of a "*drilling*" which has two gun and one rifled barrel. Its good points, however, are more than counterbalanced by its weight and cumbersome appearance.

For European sport generally, and perhaps I should say I speak only of sport in wild and unpreserved countries, no great bags of winged game need be expected. Therefore I maintain that the sportsman should content himself with one *shot* barrel in order to get other advantages. Now, what are the requirements such a single weapon must fulfil? In the first place the sportsman must have a rifle that will knock over a deer at one hundred yards at least, its trajectory being flat. Secondly, he must have a gun suitable to all winged and ground game; and lastly, he should have a *second* rifled barrel (less attention being paid in its construction to flat trajectory), useful in a fight with bear or boar, or to stop a wounded animal. If these advantages can be obtained in one double-barrelled weapon, they more than counterbalance the drawback of having a single shot-barrel. This, then, was the problem I set myself to solve, with the result that my specimen weapon is now ready, and will I trust be thoroughly tested in South-Eastern Europe this year.

It will be seen from the above that it combines at least three weapons in two barrels. Therefore it is obvious that one barrel must

“Contrive somehow a double debt to pay.”

That “somehow” and the bore are the only mystery in the matter. I may add that the weapon is so regulated that no accident can possibly happen if a cartridge, in the excitement of the moment, is thrust into the wrong barrel. This is not the case with the so-called “Cape” guns, which have one barrel an Express

rifle, the other being an ordinary smooth-bore gun. I insist on this point, as my new weapon is adapted for no less than three different kinds of cartridges—(1) shot, (2) the “Express” (in which the charge and bullet are so regulated that they will not blow a roe-deer or “rock-skipper” to pieces, as many Express rifles do), and (3) the “smasher,” with a heavy, solid bullet warranted to stop an aurochs if necessary.

Here let me strongly insist on the desirability of having one’s gun fitted, and also of having all one’s weapons stocked alike. Good shooting with the rifle can only be made by the man whose weapon “comes up” exactly in the same way as the gun he has carried for years among his native stubbles or heather. To those whom distance from England or economy makes the somewhat expensive process of restocking impossible, I may remark that a rifle stock can be advantageously lengthened by an anti-recoil heel pad. A stock can be shortened anywhere, but rifles are more generally too short than too long. Finally, a clever carpenter can alter the “cast-off” of the weapon considerably by hollowing out the inner side of the stock where the shooter’s cheek comes ; or the opposite effect can be produced with leather or rubber pads. In these cases I assume the sportsman to be in possession of a properly fitted gun to serve as a model.

The battery for the tropics is a subject requiring more consideration, and the first question to be asked is this : Is it an expedition to one place in quest of certain game, or is it a case of prolonged residence in

Asia or Africa, with the possibility of shooting all the game there found? I assume the latter, as any first-class gunmaker can answer the former.

First of all, I must own that of all rifles the 12-bore is my favourite, possibly because I have killed nearly all my really big game with this weapon. Elephant-shooting comes in few people's way now, but the 12-bore, with a steel-tipped conical bullet, is big enough for them, while it is my ideal weapon for buffalo and bison. As the foregoing pages show, I have used it with good effect at tiger and panther, as well as at large antelope and deer.

If, however, two rifles can be allowed for the above purposes, and the sportsman is rather on the large scale, the 8-bore may be preferred for elephant, rhinoceros, bison, and buffalo, while a .577 Express, *with solid bullet of pure lead*, will be found a most excellent weapon for soft-skinned dangerous game. Sir Samuel Baker,* who was the first to advocate the use of this weapon, writes to me under date 7th July, 1891, as follows: "I returned last May from a winter in the Central Provinces, and I fired at seven tigers only with solid pure lead .577. Only one of those seven moved an inch; six fell *stone dead* to the shot—the exception fell apparently dead, but at the sound of my bugle signal close to her she rolled into a nullah, where she crawled a short distance and fell dead. Some of these would assuredly have required following up had I used a hollow bullet."

There is, however, this one great advantage to the

* Dead since these lines were written.

poor man about 12-bore rifles: that, as they have gone rather out of fashion, excellent weapons of this class can be picked up for a third of the price of a '577 Express. Having a '577 or 12-bore rifle, only one smaller weapon, which may very well be single-barrelled, is necessary. Almost any bore from '303 to '360 will do for small deer, *if held straight*, and the above-named bores will also be found useful for big birds, such as peafowl, pavo, and bustard.

I will now tabulate the batteries I recommend.

I. FOR EUROPE, MEDITERRANEAN
COASTS, AND AMERICA.

1. *Ideal Battery.*

One '577 double Express rifle.
One '360 double Express rifle.
One 12-bore double gun.
One 28-bore double gun.

2. *Economic Battery.*

One single '500 Express rifle.
One double 12-bore gun.

II. FOR THE TROPICS.

1. *Ideal Battery.*

One 8-bore double rifle.
One '577 double Express rifle.
One '360 double Express rifle.
One 12-bore double gun.
One 28-bore double gun.

2. *Economic Battery.*

One 12-bore double rifle.
One '450 single Express rifle.
One 12-bore gun.

This last was practically my own battery, except that I had a pair of 12-bore rifles. One of Lancaster's "Colindian" guns, which are made to shoot a conical bullet from either barrel as well as they do shot, might take the place of one of these and of the gun, and would still keep the battery down to the number of three weapons, as given above.

In Chapter IV. I have already spoken of the difficulty of keeping clean the grooves of small-bore rifles and the extent to which their shooting is affected by "leading up." These remarks apply, though of

course to a less extent, to all rifles, and till recently the difficulty was insuperable. Now, however, the well-known gunmaker, Charles Lancaster, of New Bond Street, has surmounted it in his admirable system of "oval-bore" rifling; and I may add that there is no firm to whom the sportsman can more safely entrust that most important of all items of outfit—his battery.

There is one point on which I cannot speak too strongly, and that is the danger, to the user, of all rifles fitted with safety bolts. Of course this remark only applies to countries in which dangerous game is to be found, otherwise the only risk is that of that vexatious occurrence—a lost shot. Why on earth gunmakers ever thought it desirable to fit safety bolts to hammers I cannot conceive.* It is possibly a survival of muzzle-loading days. As hammerless guns and rifles become universal, this drawback will disappear, for the hammerless weapon having no half cock, necessarily has a safety bolt, which being in full view is in every way a different thing. Even these safety bolts are better made non-automatic.

Magazine rifles I only mention to condemn them utterly, and to express my regret that all other nations have not imitated the Swiss, whose game law forbids their use. I never met with but one man who had used them for dangerous game. The action jammed

* I have heard the excuse made that when using very heavy charges the shock of the first shot might jar off the second hammer. I have used up to half an ounce of powder myself, but never knew this to happen. If I did, I should say the locks were defective.

after his first shot at a grizzly bear, and I believe he still holds the record for the distance to—and up—the nearest tree. Certainly I never met anybody who more fully recognised the merciful dispensation of Providence in the fact that *ursa ferox* is unable to climb.

Every rifle should be fitted with a sling. Indeed, if I were not afraid of English public opinion I would go further and say every gun also. As it is I will only say that every gun has one in Germany, and I do not recollect ever seeing a loaded gun pointed at my head there, which is a great deal more than I could say in my native country. Only those who have shot a season or two on the Continent know what a grind it is to go back to our English plan of always having the gun in one's hand.

b. Knives.

There is a ridiculous idea among modern English sportsmen, that the carrying of a *couteau-de-chasse* is "theatrical and foreign-looking, you know." Let those who think so read the honest and manly recantation of General Kinloch, written after a quarter of an hour with a wounded boar and *without a knife*.* Man, unarmed, is inferior to every wild animal, and where is the sportsman to be found who can say he will never be caught with an empty rifle?

Not only should a knife be carried whenever there is a possibility of dangerous game, but also whenever any four-footed game larger than a hare may be

* "Large Game of Thibet and Bengal."

expected. In this case the knife may be smaller, so that it may go in the cartridge bag. No sportsman who has ever felt the gaze of a wounded deer upon him, when he was unprovided with the means of releasing it from its misery, will fail to know why. The knife I use for this purpose is Toledo steel, the blade being only four and a quarter inches long, whereas my hunting-knife *par excellence* is over ten inches (see p. 238). It may be as well to add that in some countries, *e.g.*, Italy, the possession of such a knife is illegal, but an Englishman can obtain a permit to carry one through any Consulate.

c. Spears.

Where much dangerous game exists I have generally used as a walking-stick a hog spear, some six feet long, the blade being covered with a soft leather sheath which can be instantly removed. I cannot say that I personally have ever had occasion to use it, but nevertheless I advocate the practice, especially in hot climates, where it is really impossible to carry a heavy rifle oneself all day. A friend of mine had a spear for this purpose with a detachable head fastened with a bayonet catch. This, however, takes a trifle longer to get ready, and the spear-head is an extra article hanging at one's belt. I have sometimes thought that the hunting-knife might be fitted with a sword bayonet handle for this purpose, but I have never practically made the experiment. As a rule, in wild countries, things cannot be made too simple.

II. CAMP EQUIPMENT.

There are so many first-rate firms into whose hands the sportsman can confidently place himself in this matter, that I only propose to mention a few things, perhaps not universally known, of which I have personally made practical trials.

The Indian hot weather involves special tents, which can be much better bought in that country. To my mind, far the best tent for every other purpose is that patented by Captain Houston Stewart, R.N., and made by Piggott Brothers, of Bishopsgate Street. The mere fact that in this tent a pole is dispensed with is sufficient to prove its superiority, but it has numerous other advantages.

Camp beds are more or less a matter of fancy. I always use one of Benjamin Edgington's Trestle Cots, which are not only very portable, but also extremely comfortable.

III. CLOTHING.

a. Shooting Clothes.

In temperate climates clothing for shooting purposes is much a matter of individual taste. Most people affect tweed suits, but I personally prefer thin cord. The only necessary condition is that one's garments should be a neutral colour; a gray-brown tinged with green is the best. In cold weather leather is capital wear, if it does not rain.

In the tropics clothing is of necessity uniform—or

nearly so—as it must satisfy certain requirements. For shooting in the Indian plains I recommend drab (khaki) drill, a little browner than that used by the army. The coat must have a thick flannel band running down the whole length of the spine. For jungle work the dress must be greener. Some capital forest mixtures are made by the Mission Weavers of Southern India, and can be bought anywhere in the East.

b. Boots.

As I have before said, my invariable footwear in the tropics has been the "Field" boot, but if I go there again I think I shall use ordinary shooting-boots and leather leggings. The great point about "Field" boots is that they exclude land leeches, ticks, and other jungle abominations, and are also a defence against snakes, but they are undeniably hot. This latter difficulty might be got over by having them made of stout brown canvas, as watertight boots are not necessary in such climates. After an exhaustive trial of shooting-boots of various countries, I have come to the conclusion that the "Wye" boots—the specialty of Hatton Brothers, of Hereford—are equal to any, being light, waterproof, and comfortable. In many places nailed shooting-boots will not do at all for stalking. In Cashmere and Thibet grass shoes serve all purposes, but are not to be had elsewhere, unless I except the *alfa* grass sandals made by the natives of Algeria. After trying rubber soles, which slip terribly in wet weather, I finally hit on jute, which combines every requisite for the stalker.

c. Hats.

The head-dress must be sufficient to resist the heat of the sun. Having tried everything, I have come to the conclusion that nothing can beat the old mushroom-shaped Calcutta *sola* (pith) hats. These should have a minimum diameter of two feet, and be fitted with a chin-strap for mounted work. It may be worth while to add that as they are generally sewn together in the most rubbishy way, I always began by removing the head-band, which I had covered with flannel and replaced, sections of cork taking the place of the bits of pith which connect hat and head-band. These and the hooks for the chin-strap I had stoutly sewn on by the *dirzee* (native tailor). I mention these precautions because, although they appear trifling, the neglect thereof is certain to end in the collapse of the hat after short wear, and if this collapse occurs in the field it may involve the loss of a good day's shooting or pig-sticking.

Many advocate the turban, which no doubt is a capital head-dress for mounted sport. I find it rather too hot, and for shooting I prefer to have the eyes well shaded from the glare. The terai and English-made sun-hats are not sufficient to resist the solar rays at noon.

A shooting-cap, which I devised, and which I found most useful for morning, afternoon, and winter work in India, as well as in less hot climates, is made as follows: An ordinary English hunting-cap is covered with khaki cloth instead of the usual black velvet. A

quilted flap to match can be attached to this in a few seconds by three hooks and eyes, and thus covers the nape of the neck and the temples. This flap can be carried in the pocket or under the girth-tabs of the saddle. When on it makes a head covering in which I have been out in summer in India till ten a.m., and even later.

d. Waterproofs.

Mackintoshes are a necessary evil everywhere. After trying all sorts I got Andersons to make me a long kilt, which buttons on to the brace buttons, and is covered in its turn by a cape which can be thrown back to enable one to shoot. This, I find, combines nearly every requirement of the dismounted man, while two large pockets in front are available to hold cartridges, etc.

IV. OPTICAL INSTRUMENTS.

The field glass is the sportsman's *alter ego*, and in many sports a telescope is equally necessary. There are also other useful instruments, with which, however, I have never bothered myself. Many London firms, such as J. A. Steward, of the Strand, make a specialty of outfitting sportsmen and explorers. The compass, of course, is indispensable everywhere, and for shooting trips to wild countries more than one should be taken.

Owing to short-sightedness—only slight, I am glad to say—I have for the last twelve years shot in spectacles. It is to Steward that I am obliged for the

following hint, which he gave me when making me one of his excellent shot-proof pairs: "Many gentlemen use glasses a little too strong, even with the gun, but when it comes to rifle-shooting they blurr the back-sight." Now I had noticed this blurring with some of my glasses, but it required the practical optician to tell me the cause.

It is my belief too few men shoot in spectacles. Many a man tries to improve his shooting by altering his gun-stock or having a two-eyed sight, whereas the fault lies behind the gun altogether. It is not enough to see the pheasant, you must be able to see *its eye* as far as you can kill it. If you cannot, carefully fitted glasses will improve your shooting. To obviate misconception I will put this test more clearly; to shoot well a man should be able to see, with or without glasses, the eye of a pheasant standing still at forty-five to fifty yards' distance.

In wet weather spectacles should be rubbed over with a very little *pure* glycerine before beginning work.

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